Homelessness in Edmonton: A Call to Action

May 14, 1999

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Minister of Alberta Family
and Social Services
104 Legislature Building
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Honourable Iris Evans
Minister of Alberta
Municipal Affairs
424 Legislature Building
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Mayor Bill Smith
City of Edmonton
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, AB T5J 2R7

Dear Ministers Oberg and Evans and Mayor Smith:

The Edmonton Task Force on Homelessness is pleased to provide you with its final report, *Homelessness in Edmonton: A Call to Action.*

The report includes our short and long-term recommendations and highlights the collaboration that led to our conclusions. We believe our *Call to Action* makes it clear that homelessness is a serious issue in Edmonton – and that concerted effort is needed to address it. Our recommendations provide the next steps, and build on the work already done by the community and government in this area.

Throughout our work, we were impressed by the dedication and concern expressed by the community – the homeless themselves, agency representatives who support the homeless and the business sector. Our report includes quotations from participants at our public forum in an effort to bring the issue to life.

We trust the report will be released and communicated to participants and the public.

As co-chairs, we appreciated the energy and commitment provided by the members of the Task Force. We also benefited greatly from the advice and activities of our Working Group.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important initiative.

Yours truly,

Jim Taylor, Councillor
City of Edmonton
Co-Chair
Edmonton Task Force
on Homelessness

Gene Zwozdesky, M.L.A.
Province of Alberta
Co-Chair
Edmonton Task Force
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Homelessness in Edmonton
A Call to Action

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The original logo used in this report was designed by Dan Henry, graphic designer with Planning and Development, City of Edmonton.

> *"The scope of the problem is expanding. We see the trends in other cities... and we're starting to see it in Edmonton. We need to act and need to act now."*
>
> – Christopher Smith
> Edmonton Community Foundation

Homelessness in Edmonton
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHY ACTION IS NEEDED NOW

Homelessness is a reality in Edmonton. Its incidence and impacts are growing and will continue to grow if not addressed now through collaborative action by the community and governments.

The reality of homeless people's lives is chilling. Studies confirm direct connections between homelessness and wide-ranging health and social problems:

- higher rates of premature death, infectious disease, chronic conditions, mental illness and substance abuse
- poor nutrition, poor hygiene and a higher likelihood of experiencing violence or trauma
- lack of privacy and security, and reduced connections to the wider community.

Evidence gathered by the Edmonton Task Force on Homelessness reinforces the severity of the situation. The Task Force was formed in November 1998 in response to concerns shared by the Mayor of the City of Edmonton, the Minister of Family and Social Services and the Minister of Alberta Municipal Affairs.

Given the mandate to develop short and long-term solutions to homelessness, the Task Force looked to the community by:

- Counting the homeless in Edmonton on a cold winter day.
- Holding focus groups with agencies serving sub-groups of the homeless.
- Examining best practices throughout the world.
- Holding a public forum on homelessness.

Some key learnings resulted.

Homelessness affects many Edmontonians: 836 were counted on March 18, 1999

The count found 313 people living absolute homeless – *having no housing alternative* – and 523 sheltered homeless – *living in emergency accommodations*.

> *"The homeless situation is over 100 times worse than when I was growing up... particularly with people with mental health problems."*
>
> – Gary Trudell
> former homeless person

Edmonton's homeless are not a homogeneous group.

Many diverse groups are among the homeless: families (including 112 children), youth, single men and women, seniors, Aboriginals. They reflect equally diverse characteristics: mental illness, poverty, substance abuse, family breakdown, unemployment, lack of life skills. A combination of these factors often adds to the complexity.

There is no single solution to homelessness.

The diversity of people and situations requires an equally diverse and extensive set of solutions. Homeless solutions can reach far beyond the inner-city.

Homelessness is a symptom of broader systemic issues: we need to look beyond.

Community feedback showed the Task Force that its starting-point definition of homelessness – either having no housing alternatives or living in emergency shelters or condemned housing – was too narrow for the reality of what's happening in Edmonton. Members recognized that more emergency shelter spaces are not a lasting solution to homelessness; low-cost affordable housing and associated support are what will make a difference.

The Edmonton community has the capacity to address the affordable housing issue, if governments provide adequate funding and supports.

The Edmonton community – the non-profit and business sectors – has the ability, the experience and the desire to provide more low-income affordable housing, but needs the resources. Assistance from all levels of government – federal, provincial and municipal – is needed. Government can demonstrate its leadership by providing the resources and supportive policies that will engage the non-profit and private sector as partners in implementing the needed projects.

These conclusions form the basis for the Task Force's *Call to Action* recommendations.

SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS

EMERGENCY SHELTER SPACES

Recommendation:

1. **The City of Edmonton and Province of Alberta to provide short-term funding to agencies for additional emergency shelter spaces, based on evaluation of the Task Force's 1998-99 short-term initiative, until longer-term solutions appropriately deal with the need.**

   Specific actions:

   1.1 Provide adequate funding to maintain the level of improvement achieved in 1998-99.

   1.2 Ensure additional funding for 1999-2000 addresses the needs of families with children in addition to singles.

   1.3 Involve the agency community in establishing priorities, as was done for the Task Force's 1998-99 shelter spaces initiative.

"Lack of adequate housing, or a reasonable safe and secure place, takes a mighty toll on one's health."

– Lawrence Willier
Amisk Housing Association

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

The Edmonton Homelessness Task Force recognizes that the provision of more emergency shelter beds is a necessary, but 'band-aid' solution. To meet the need for low-income affordable housing, the Task Force developed longer-term broader solutions that would have more lasting impact toward resolving the issues. Recommendations and specific actions come under the headings of:

- Housing supply
- Support services
- Leadership and community involvement
- Policy development
- Funding

HOUSING SUPPLY

Recommendation:

2. **Support the provision of 500 additional housing units each year over the next five years (2000 to 2005) to accommodate a range of low-income priority needs through a continuum of emergency, transitional and long-term housing in Edmonton.**

   Specific actions:

   2.1 Address low-income priority housing needs including those of singles, Aboriginals, mentally ill, families with children, seniors, women and youth.

   2.2 Consider conversion of vacant or underutilized government buildings to low- income housing and better use of existing vacant social housing units.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Recommendation:

3. **Enhance support services that will help people stay adequately housed within the community.**

   Specific actions:

   3.1 Enact the underlying principle that people are not discharged from medical institutions without (1) a place to go and (2) community supports in place.

   3.2 Ensure the range of staff supports needed by users of special needs or supportive housing options are provided along with the housing. Examples of such "special housing needs" target groups are:

   - low-income 'hard-to-house' seniors needing supervised, lodge-type accommodation,
   - mentally-ill persons in need of supportive management options,
   - persons with substance abuse histories requiring longer-term recovery accommodation,
   - homeless youth in need of transitional supportive housing, and
   - women with or without children leaving abusive relationships in need of second stage (six-month) or third stage (12-month) accommodation.

3.3 Reduce the impediments that security deposits present to both landlords and tenants of affordable housing. Options include an insurance program to reimburse landlords for the repair of damages that exceed the security deposit's value. Also, enhance education about security deposits for both landlords and tenants. The City's Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board role and resources could be strengthened to provide that service. (Also see Action 5.2).

3.4 Consider ways of assisting with transportation costs, such as through free bus tickets or provision of a transportation allowance, that would encourage the homeless to seek accommodation outside the inner-city.

3.5 Enhance drop-in child care for caregivers who have difficulty seeking affordable housing and employment.

3.6 Explore methods to assist the homeless with their financial management needs, such as a community bank or financial guardian.

LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Recommendation:

4. **Engage the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing to lead implementation of the Task Force's recommendations. The Committee should review and expand its mandate and membership to ensure it functions as a decision-making body with adequate diversity of representation to carry out the required work.**

Specific actions:

4.1 Provincial and City members should be senior officials, such as Assistant Deputy Minister level or equivalent, to ensure decision-making ability.

4.2 Form an agreement and a budget to provide the administrative supports needed to carry out the work of the Committee, including a Housing Initiatives Coordinator. The coordinator would be co-funded by the three levels of government and accountable to the EJPCOH to support the Committee in implementing the recommendations. The budget would also cover implementation costs for such activities as the count, survey and database as outlined below.

4.3 Develop an action plan for implementation of the recommendations, including measures of success.

> *"We have the knowledge, skill and capacity to duplicate any and all of these projects and to house more people. All that's missing is capital funds to build or lease these units."*
>
> – Martin Garber-Conrad
> Edmonton City Centre
> Church Corp.

4.4 Continue to conduct the homeless count initiated by the Task Force as a means of identifying and monitoring trends among the homeless. Follow-up counts are recommended for late August 1999, March and August 2000 and every second year thereafter.

4.5 Conduct a homeless survey to find out more about the homeless — demographics, characteristics, causes of homelessness, etc., within a year of this report. Include tracking of a few individuals to assess services used and costs involved.

4.6 Implement and maintain a computerized database of housing and services.

4.7 Undertake an advocacy/education role to assist the homeless, change public attitudes and build understanding and support.

4.8 As a longer-term objective, consider partnerships and joint ventures among facilities to create an even better organization of existing agencies.

4.9 Account for progress on established measures at least annually to the City of Edmonton, Alberta Family and Social Services, Alberta Municipal Affairs and the Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Recommendation:

5. **Review Supports for Independence (SFI) policies of Family and Social Services, with the intention of ensuring they provide sufficient support to meet recipients' housing needs.**

Specific actions:

5.1 Improve the provincial shelter allowance to allow people to obtain adequate housing in the marketplace. Revise current policy from providing one blanket rate across the province to having community-specific rates that reflect current market rents. For example, establish shelter allowances based on a portion of the average market rent (say 85%) for each community using annual rental rate surveys.

5.2 Look at alternative ways of ensuring security deposits aren't a hindrance to securing housing for SFI recipients. One such option is reinstatement of the policy of paying security deposits for all SFI recipients.

5.3 Consider a policy that SFI will be provided to people with no fixed address.

5.4 Examine age restrictions on the shelter allowance, so that youths under age 18 living without family support may qualify.

Recommendation:

6. **Review current social housing policies managed by Alberta Municipal Affairs.**

Specific actions:

6.1 Consider a graduated formula for Rents Geared to Income, rather than the standard by which all individuals or families pay 30% of their gross income toward rent.

6.2 Ensure policies support a transition from subsidized to non-subsidized housing.

> *"The system (of group homes and half-way houses) does work - there's just not enough of it."*
>
> – Sharon Springer
> Schizophrenia Society

FUNDING

Recommendation:

7. **Support the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund as a mechanism to generate predictable, sustainable and dedicated funding to meet affordable housing needs in Edmonton.**

Specific actions:

7.1 Reinvest in housing the City of Edmonton's annual savings, arising from eliminated subsidies for provincial social housing, which in 1998 was $1.3 million and in some cases would have continued for 30 years. This would bring the City back to its base level from which additional funding could be determined. The funds would be contributed to the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund to assist in development of the housing units specified in Recommendation No.2, and would be matched by the provincial and federal governments.

7.2 Designate a percentage from the sale of city and provincial-owned land to the development of low-income housing, and contribute it to the Trust Fund to assist with the development of 500 additional housing units annually (Recommendation No. 2).

7.3 Engage the private sector in matching the funds dedicated by governments to additional housing projects.

Recommendation:

8. **Urge the three levels of government – federal, provincial, municipal – to commit additional funding to meet the housing and support needs in Edmonton as outlined in the previous recommendations.**

Specific actions:

8.1 Agree to funding levels and clarification of roles in housing for each level of government within a Memorandum of Understanding.

8.2 Support the national initiative to establish a national housing policy.

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FULL REPORT

1. ESTABLISHING THE EDMONTON TASK FORCE ON HOMELESSNESS

The Ministers of Alberta Family and Social Services and Alberta Municipal Affairs and the Mayor of the City of Edmonton agreed to review the issue of homelessness in Edmonton through the formation of a jointly-chaired Task Force in the fall of 1998.

The Task Force's terms of reference noted, "Solutions to homelessness require a community response and the Task Force will involve the community in developing a strategy to address both the short-term and long-term issues."

Twelve members were appointed to the Task Force, representing the private industry, the non-profit community and government sectors. A Working Group also was appointed to assist the Task Force.

> *"Today I'm addressing not just the homeless, but those in danger of becoming homeless... Shelters aren't the answer. We need safe, affordable housing for all."*
>
> – Deanna Shorten
> Poverty in Action

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE TASK FORCE:

Short-Term:

1. To determine the nature and magnitude, causes and impacts of immediate needs of homeless in Edmonton.
2. Based on the outcomes of this review, to bring forward a community-based funding solution to meet priority needs in Edmonton, no later than November 30, 1998.
3. To assess the existing inventory of accommodation to meet the needs of homeless persons in Edmonton.

Long-Term:

1. To develop a sustainable mechanism to carry out a homeless count every two years. The first homeless count to be completed within 3 months from Task Force start-up (Feb. 1, 1999).
2. To develop a strategy to meet identified homeless needs in Edmonton, including specific partnership initiatives and project proposals. To be developed within 6 months from Task Force start-up (by May 1, 1999).
3. To develop an implementation plan to ensure the goals of the strategy are achieved.

METHODOLOGIES

Some methodologies to be considered were outlined for the Task Force:

1. To include and make use of existing networks, coalitions and alliances concerned with homeless needs in the City of Edmonton.
2. To undertake research into municipal and regional experiences in this area, including a review of "best practices" elsewhere in Alberta and Canada.
3. To facilitate new linkages and partnership opportunities in the development of solutions.

DEFINITION

The Task Force established the following definition* of the homeless for its work:

1. Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives) and
2. Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay).

ACTIVITIES

To fulfill its mandate and objectives, the Task Force developed an extensive research program. Activities included:

- A count of the homeless in Edmonton on March 18, 1999.
- Focus groups with agency representatives supporting various sub-groups of the homeless.
- An agency survey.
- Literature review of best practices for homelessness throughout the world.
- A public forum on homelessness on April 9, 1999.

The Task Force involved the Edmonton community in all of these activities except the literature review, and benefited from tremendous participation and input.

* See Section 5, "Definitions", page 42

2. MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

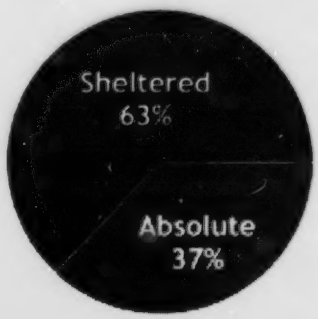
'SNAPSHOT' OF THE HOMELESS

A community-supported count on March 18, 1999 – the first official count ever held in Edmonton – provides a 'snapshot' of the homeless in the city.

Who were the homeless that day? In brief:

- 836 persons
- 313 with no permanent place to stay; 523 in shelters
- About 70 families, including 112 children
- Majority single males
- More than half Caucasian, 42% Aboriginal

Participants counted 836 homeless persons – 313 absolute homeless with no housing alternative and 523 sheltered homeless, living in emergency accommodations.



While the majority of the homeless were single, about 70 families also were counted. The families included 112 children and 91 caregivers – 55% of them were absolute homeless while 45% stayed at shelters. Caregivers included men, women and seniors.

Children were the second largest group, accounting for 13%, following adults (67%). Youth and seniors both accounted for 10% of the homeless population.

"The key to the answer to homelessness is to build more housing."

– Debbie Saidman
Edmonton Housing
Trust Fund

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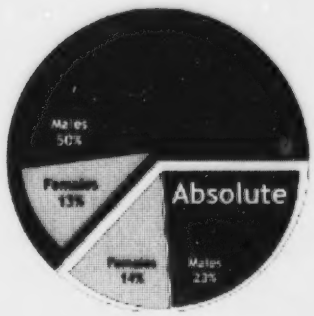
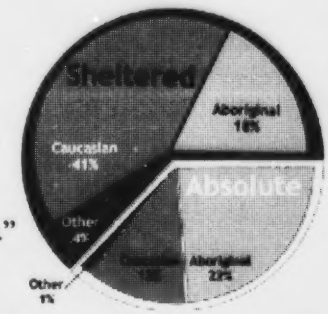
A majority of the homeless were male. Among females, almost half were absolute homeless — a higher proportion than among the males.



Caucasians formed the highest percentage (53%) for observed race among the homeless, followed by Aboriginals (42%). Only 5% were observed as "other."



THE BIGGER PICTURE

There is much more to homelessness and its impacts than statistics on the sheer number of homeless. As participants at the April 9 Public Forum on Homelessness emphasized, it is important to "put a face" on the homeless. The Task Force obtained considerable insight into the health and social implications of homelessness through feedback at the public forum and focus groups as well as through the literature search.

The reality of homeless people's lives is chilling. Studies* confirm direct connections between homelessness and wide-ranging health and social problems. Compared to the general population, homeless people face higher rates of premature death, infectious disease, acute illness and chronic conditions and dental problems. They are prone to higher rates of injury and violence as well as depression, risk of suicide, mental illness and alcohol or substance abuse. Their situation is worsened by poor nutrition and hygiene. Homelessness also contributes to the development of treatment-resistant tuberculosis and other diseases such as Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS.

* Taking Responsibility for Homelessness: An Action Plan for Toronto, the Report of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force, January 1999, and specifically Appendix H to the Report: Interim Report of the Task Force, *"Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness."*

The social impacts of homelessness are many and varied; they include a lack of privacy, threats to personal safety, security risks to personal property, a loss of social and employment skills, and reduced connections to the wider community.

Specific health and social impacts vary greatly among the diversity of people who experience homelessness. For example, undernourishment, developmental delays and lower visual/motor skills compared to other children may be issues affecting homeless families; prostitution or the return to abusive situations are likely to be concerns affecting homeless youth and women leaving abusive relationships.

People most negatively affected by homelessness are often those with multiple problems, such as mentally ill persons who are also substance abusers and may have physical health problems.

Without stable and affordable housing and support services, the unmet needs of the homeless can result in excessive demands on police, hospitals and community agencies.

Input to the Task Force also showed that to focus on the narrowly defined homeless and their emergency shelter needs would be too limiting. As described above, issues influencing homelessness are much more far-reaching and affect the poor and members of various sub-groups such as the mentally ill, Aboriginals, women leaving abusive relationships, youth and seniors.

Agencies, the homeless and the community serving the homeless clearly pointed to the lack of low-income affordable housing, along with other supports, as the root of the problem. A New York University study* supports this premise. A key finding was that regardless of social disorders, 80% of formerly homeless families with subsidized housing stayed permanently housed.

> *"The issue of racism needs to be addressed. One of the biggest barriers to housing is racism."*
>
> – Valerie Kaufman
> Edmonton Aboriginal
> Urban Affairs Committee

* Shinn, Marybeth, Weitzman, Beth, C., et.al. "Predictors of Homelessness Among Families in New York City: From Shelter Request to Housing Stability", The American Journal of Public Health, American Public Health Association, Volume 88, Number11, November 1998.

3. WHAT WE FOUND: *Showing The Need For Action*

THE REALITY OF HOMELESSNESS

Information gathered by the Task Force breaks many of the preconceptions or myths people may hold about homelessness and what can be done about it. The reality is:

A. Homelessness affects many Edmontonians.
Even with the narrow definition of homeless, the March 18 count captured more than 800 persons. Anecdotal input and lessons learned from the count lead the Task Force to believe that is an underestimation.

B. Edmonton has a diverse homeless population.
While many of Edmonton's homeless are single males, the homeless population also includes a disproportionately large share of Aboriginals, as well as families with children, youth, single women, mentally ill persons and seniors.

C. Homelessness affects people for varying lengths of time.
Homelessness may be a temporary condition for some; more often it is periodic (for example, for welfare recipients who run out of money) or chronic (for mentally ill persons poorly connected to support systems, for example).

D. Most homeless situations stem from a profound and sustained lack of positive choice options.
Conditions such as family breakdown, abuse, lack of life skills, physical disability or mental illness, discrimination, poverty, substance abuse/addictions – or frequently some combination of these – severely limit the options of many of the homeless.

E. Homeless solutions can reach far beyond the inner-city.
Given the diversity of people affected and situations involved, solutions should be equally diverse and wide-ranging.

F. Emergency shelters are important but are not the sole response to the diversity of homeless needs in Edmonton.

Emergency spaces meet the immediate needs of some homeless persons. However, their effectiveness is limited in addressing needs that contribute to homelessness. Many homeless persons, such as youth, avoid shelters because they prefer less structured environments. Homeless caregivers with children often avoid emergency settings for fear their children will be apprehended if they go there. On the other hand, shelters can become long-term housing replacements for some people, and create a bottleneck, because of the lack of low-income affordable housing. Long-term affordable housing and improved social support systems are needed to address the homeless needs in Edmonton.

G. Homeless needs in Edmonton are significantly linked to the lack of low-income affordable housing.

Low turnover rates and repeat users in emergency shelters are evidence of the lack of low-income affordable housing options in the city and the declining rental housing vacancy rate (expected to reach 1% by the end of 1999). Many of the periodic and chronic homeless would be better served in transitional and long-term housing than in emergency shelter spaces.

H. The Edmonton community has the capacity to address the affordable housing issue, if governments provide adequate funding and supports.

The Edmonton community – the non-profit and business sectors – has the ability, the experience and the desire to provide more low-income affordable housing, but needs the resources. Assistance from all levels of government – federal, provincial and municipal – is needed. Government can demonstrate its leadership by providing the resources and supportive policies that will engage the non-profit and private sector as partners in implementing the needed projects.

"I worry about the children. I don't believe they'll show up in the counts. Many of the things we do now are primarily for the single."

– Brian Bechtel
Edmonton Social
Planning Council

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Agency focus groups and best practices

The Task Force's research into best practices among worldwide homeless initiatives, along with the agency focus groups and survey, provides valuable insight into the homeless.

General conclusions that apply equally in all jurisdictions include:

- **The homeless are not a homogenous group.**
  Typically, the homeless population is differentiated across two dimensions:
  - demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, family status or race
  - factors affecting homelessness, many of which are health-related such as mental illness and physical disabilities, addictions or family violence

  The combination of these two dimensions yields a very diverse set of homeless populations.

- **Social support networks have evolved to reflect the diversity and meet the demands of the homeless.**
  Such an evolution results in what often appears to be a patchwork set of agencies and programs.

- **There is no single solution to homelessness.**
  This conclusion held true for every jurisdiction examined. It was also true for specific agency design. The diversity of the homeless population requires a diversity of solutions at every level.

- **Best practices are changing to reflect diversity in populations.**
  Best practices recognize the reality that no single solution to homelessness exists. Rather, best practice is now characterized by:
  - diverse agency and program design
  - integrating mechanisms designed to network and coordinate

Some answers to the question of why people are homeless come from the literature research:

- **Individual circumstances:**
  - family breakdown
  - substance abuse
  - mental illness
  - physical disability
  - unemployed/unemployable
  - poverty
  - insufficient life skills
- **Structural/Systemic characteristics:**
  - **De-institutionalization:** The current trend to de-institutionalization has placed people in the community who need supports to make the transition successful.
  - **Housing affordability and availability:** Despite trends in interest rates, housing is expensive and beyond the range of many in the lower income levels. Even the lowest cost housing alternatives present significant barriers including the up-front costs such as security and utility deposits.
  - **Economic conditions:** There has been a general economic trend toward gr- vth in Alberta (driving housing prices up) combined with greater variation in the types of jobs available. More temporary, contract and similar job arrangements are affecting either levels or income or the stability of income.
  - **Public attitudes:** A range of public attitudes – such as perceived employability and the 'not-in-my-backyard' attitude to solutions — affect the ability of individuals or agencies to help address homelessness issues.
  - **Public policy & programs:** Levels of supports available to many have been limited or reduced.
  - **Social support network:** Because support agencies are stretched to the limit financially, many are no longer able to provide the range or depth of support required.

About 50 participants in eight Edmonton focus groups proposed a myriad of suggestions (see details in Appendx 3, *A Review of Strategies and Best Practices).* They can be categorized into five areas:

- **Advocacy**, dealing with the need to change attitudes, address myths and build public understanding and support.

> *"The sense of homelessness goes beyond people on the street. People in poverty feel it too."*
>
> – Richard Welch
> Alberta Mental
> Health Board

- **Funding**, dealing with current funding levels toward either individuals or agencies and organizations whose mandates are to support the homeless.
- **Policy**, dealing with policy issues of either the federal or provincial governments concerning the delivery of support to the homeless.
- **Programming**, dealing with ideas for such things as additional shelter and housing, support services and financial supports.
- **System design**, dealing with how current programs and agencies could improve effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Public Forum on Homelessness

In addition to the agency-based research and literature review, the Task Force's Public Forum provided a considerable range of input. The views of 29 individuals or organizations focused on two things:

- **Issues** involved with or contributing to homelessness
- **Solutions** that could reduce homelessness.

Throughout, four low-income groups were mentioned as being particularly affected by housing issues:

- Aboriginals
- Families with children
- Mentally ill
- Hard-to-house seniors

Common themes emerged.

Issues influencing the homeless and affordable housing included:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of financial supports to help low-income people obtain affordable housing
- Lack of government commitment and the political will to focus on housing
- The need for more coordination among agencies and service departments
- Cultural and societal factors including racism and safety concerns

Proposed solutions also fit into five main categories:

- The need for leadership from three levels of government primarily, then the community
- Capital funding for new developments and renovations, as well as funding at the support level. In particular, reinvestment of the City of Edmonton's saved $1.3 million into housing
- Development of more assisted or affordale housing of all types
- Target-group specific solutions for Aboriginal, families with children, mentally ill and seniors
- Education to change deep-rooted prejudices and attitudes within society

> *"The lack of affordable housing and lack of income to afford housing create the problem. That's true for the most vulnerable, but also for those whose incomes are close to the poverty level. The issues of housing and homelessness can't be viewed in isolation."*
>
> – Frank Manzara
> Quality of Life
> Commission

TRADITION OF COLLABORATION NEEDS RESOURCES BOOST

The Task Force's research also shows that the Edmonton community has accomplished many housing initiatives and continues to work together to make improvements – but resources are the significant limiting factor. The issues involved with homelessness are generally well understood, the need for more affordable housing of all types is recognized, and a proud tradition of collaboration exists. Collaboration has proven successful among government, the community and private sectors in planning and implementing initiatives, as well as on a day-to-day basis within the community of agencies and organizations that serve the homeless.

The community is eager and willing to do more, but needs government resources and support to put their collaborative capabilities into further concrete action.

The **Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness** (ECOH) is an example of the collaborative efforts underway in Edmonton, and the collective energy that would be available for new housing initiatives.

ECOH is a community-based group with more than 100 member agencies. It was formed by about 30 agencies in 1986 out of a common concern for the problems of homelessness in Edmonton, with the threefold mandate of identifying the scope of homelessness in the City, identifying a range of solutions and developing an implementation plan for those solutions. In 1987, ECOH released its major report, *No Place Like Home – Homelessness in Edmonton*, which included 43 recommendations to address homelessness, support services and housing affordability issues in Edmonton.

Today, ECOH continues to represent the views of its wide membership base which includes such organizations as The Alberta Mental Health Consumer Network, McCauley Community League, Edmonton Inner-City Housing Society, The Mennonite Central Committee and People In Need Shelter (PINS) Society.

Representatives continue to meet monthly to generate and provide information and advocacy services on behalf of homeless needs in Edmonton and to develop active responses to provincial policy initiatives, including various Alberta Municipal Affairs Business Plans. ECOH also undertakes specific projects to meet homeless and affordable housing needs. For example, in 1997 the Coalition applied for and received funding under the CMHC *Homegrown Solutions* program to look at the development of an Edmonton-based Housing Trust Fund.

ECOH appoints four persons to represent its membership on the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing.

The **Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing** (EJPCOH) is an interjurisdictional group that meets regularly to review and approve low-income and special housing needs assessments, and to develop short and long-term plans to address priority needs. Its membership includes representatives from all three levels of government, private industry and community agencies (through ECOH). The Committee is chaired by the Assistant Deputy Minister of Alberta Municipal Affairs; other representatives come from such organizations as Alberta Solicitor-General, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, The Greater Edmonton Home Builders Association, The City of Edmonton, and the Greater Edmonton Foundation. The Committee is supported by a Working Group.

The initial mission of the EJPCOH, established in 1991, included six goals:

1. To develop initiatives to meet the identified needs of the Edmonton Inner-City Housing Need and Demand Study with emphasis on permanent, long-term housing.
2. To coordinate and integrate the related governmental, interdepartmental, and non-profit organizations, policies, programs and budget processes.
3. To ensure input and involvement of the community and private sector in the development and implementation of plans and initiatives.
4. To encourage stabilization of the homeless.
5. To prevent at risk groups from becoming homeless.
6. To evaluate and adjust the EJPCOH Three-Year Plan (to meet priority low-income and special housing needs in Edmonton).

> *"Aboriginals face multiple barriers in access. They are increasingly becoming marginalized."*
>
> – Janet Trottier
> Boyle Street Community Service (Housing Registry)

Its accomplishments are significant. From 1992 to 1994, EJPCOH-approved housing plans resulted in the commitment of a $10.8 million capital program involving 242 housing units under Federal/Provincial Social Housing Programs. This initiative was cited at the Task Force's public forum as an example of what the community can accomplish when given adequate resources.

More recently, EJPCOH activities have focused more on priority housing needs updates and plans to meet those needs than housing projects because of a lack of resources. In 1998, a EJPCOH report was released by Alberta Municipal Affairs, the City of Edmonton and ECOH: *Supply and Demand Update on Affordable Housing for Low-Income and Special Needs Households.* In September 1998, the EJPCOH approved the report *"Recommended Actions for the Short-Term Plan (1998-1999) and the Long-Term Plan (1999-2001) for Housing in Edmonton."*

Another active community group is the **Urban Corps Support Network** (UCSN). It is a national organization of front-line agencies that work in the inner cities. The Edmonton chapter has existed for about 20 years and focuses on inner-city concerns such as health and support services. Specific issues it has dealt with include street prostitution and non-beverage alcohol use. Accomplishments include advocating for and starting an additional shelter and obtaining a community worker to help with providing input to the area redevelopment plan. When significant housing issues arise, UCSN refers them to ECOH – another indication of the collaboration taking place in the Edmonton community.

4. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE: *Call to Action*

SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS
(Objectives A1-3)

EMERGENCY SHELTER SPACES

Recommendation:

1. **The City of Edmonton and Province of Alberta to provide short-term funding to agencies for additional emergency shelter spaces, based on evaluation of the Task Force's 1998-99 short-term initiative, until longer-term solutions appropriately deal with the need.**

   Specific actions:

   1.1 Provide adequate funding to maintain the level of improvement achieved in 1998-99.

   1.2 Ensure additional funding for 1999-2000 addresses the needs of families with children in addition to singles.

   1.3 Involve the agency community in establishing priorities, as was done for the Task Force's 1998-99 shelter spaces initiative.

In response to the short-term objectives of the Task Force, $177,000 funding was provided for 56 additional emergency spaces in existing inner-city shelters; funding covered the cost of the additional beds or mats, meals and support on a one-time basis for six months, ending May 15, 1999. The $177,000 funding was provided by the provincial and municipal governments and the private sector.

Inner-city shelter representatives collaborated in the development of the short-term solution. Single men and women, with and without immediate substance abuse problems, were identified as having the highest priority needs at that time. It was also recognized that other homeless needs in Edmonton were not included in these groups.

The needs of families with children are also urgent. The Task Force therefore recommends that some funds be devoted to a short-term solution for families. Some possible ways of providing spaces for families include using available spaces that exist outside the inner-city in social housing facilities or leasing motel rooms.

> *"As people get older, health decreases; there are disability, literacy, a lot of security issues. To be senior on the streets is probably a bit harder."*
>
> – Heidie Velluw
> Operation Friendship

Ideally, the need for these shelter spaces will decline as longer-term solutions take effect, but they will be needed in the short-term.

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

(Objectives B1-3)

The Edmonton Homelessness Task Force recognizes that the provision of more emergency shelter beds is a necessary, but 'band-aid' solution. To meet the need for low-income affordable housing, the Task Force developed longer-term broader solutions that would have more lasting impact toward resolving the issues. Recommendations and specific actions come under the headings of:

- Housing supply
- Support services
- Leadership and community involvement
- Policy development
- Funding

HOUSING SUPPLY

Recommendation:

2. Support the provision of 500 additional housing units* each year over the next five years (2000 to 2005) to accommodate a range of low-income priority needs through a continuum of emergency, transitional and long-term housing in Edmonton.

Specific actions:

2.1 Address low-income priority housing needs including those of singles, Aboriginals, mentally ill, families with children, seniors, women and youth.

2.2 Consider conversion of vacant or under-utilized government buildings to low-income housing, and better use of existing vacant social housing units.

A long-term needs assessment conducted by the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing (EJPCOH) in mid-1997 estimated the demand for additional low-income and special needs housing at 2,600 units. About 70% of that demand is for independent living options, with the

* See "Housing Unit" definition in Section 5, "Definitions", page 42.

remaining 30% for a range of long-term and transitional special needs/supportive housing options. The needs assessment identified eight target groups, with specific solutions for each.

Edmonton housing market conditions since 1997 show that the need is increasing; 2,600 is therefore a conservative estimate of housing needs over the next five years. For example, when the needs assessment was done, Edmonton's rental housing vacancy rate was 4.6% and there was no waiting list for housing managed by the Capital Region Housing Corporation. Today, the average vacancy rate has declined to 1.8% (with projections it could fall to 1% by year-end 1999) and there are more than 700 approved applications on the CRHC waiting list.

As reinforced by the Task Force's research, the lack of affordable housing is a significant part of the homelessness problem. Other observations are that the homeless are not a homogeneous group and there is no single solution. The 500 additional units annually must therefore respond to the wide range of needs that exist. For example, focus groups and best practice research revealed that youth often do not want a structured environment and therefore avoid agencies with some form of recovery program. More of a non-judgmental environment is needed to meet their specific needs. Similarly, caregivers with children are often reluctant to go to shelters for fear their children will be apprehended if they go there. Longer-term alternatives are required. Aboriginal persons, who may be included in priority housing needs groups like the mentally ill, families with children, women and seniors, may also have special needs such as sufficient space for extended families.

Conversion of existing vacant buildings was suggested to the Task Force as one way of providing additional housing units. Such buildings as the Charles Camsell Hospital could be examined as potential housing sources.

Better use of existing residential facilities could also help to meet this demand. The recent conversion of McCauley Lodge from a conventional Senior's Lodge to accommodate "hard-to-house" inner city seniors has enabled this formerly under-utilized facility to meet a high priority housing need.

> *"With affordable housing, people can stabilize their home. Physical health is better, medications go down, they have food. They can start going to school and getting jobs."*
>
> – Betty Farrell
> Edmonton Inner-City Housing

SUPPORT SERVICES

Recommendation:

3. Enhance support services that will help people stay adequately housed within the community.

Specific actions:

3.1 Enact the underlying principle that people are not discharged from medical institutions without (1) a place to go and (2) community supports in place.

3.2 Ensure the range of staff supports needed by users of special needs or supportive housing options are provided along with the housing. Examples of such "special housing needs" target groups are:

- **low-income 'hard-to-house' seniors needing supervised, lodge-type accommodation,**
- **mentally-ill persons in need of supportive management options,**
- **persons with substance abuse histories requiring longer-term recovery accommodation,**
- **homeless youth in need of transitional supportive housing, and**
- **women with or without children leaving abusive relationships in need of second stage (six-month) or third stage (12-month) accommodation.**

3.3 Reduce the impediments that security deposits present to both landlords and tenants of affordable housing. Options include an insurance program to reimburse landlords for the repair of damages that exceed the security deposit's value. Also, enhance education about security deposits for both landlords and tenants. The City's Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board role and resources could be strengthened to provide that service. (Also see Action 5.2).

3.4 Consider ways of assisting with transportation costs, such as through free bus tickets or provision of a transportation allowance, that would encourage the homeless to seek accommodation outside the inner-city.

3.5 Enhance drop-in child care for caregivers who have difficulty seeking affordable housing and employment.

3.6 Explore methods to assist the homeless with their financial management needs, such as a community bank or financial guardian.

Input to the Task Force clearly showed that homeless or low-income people need many supports in addition to actual housing to make it possible and feasible to live in accommodation of all types. Many supports already exist in the community, but they are so overtaxed that people cannot access them.

The Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing's 1997 housing needs assessment showed that 30% of the estimated 2,600 unit demand for additional housing units is for a range of long-term and transitional special needs housing options. Persons with those needs require support services not normally provided in housing, and without which, they would be unable to live independently.

Support services need to be targeted to specific groups to deal directly with the nature of their coping issues, whether recovery from addictions, dealing with mental difficulties including the brain injured or difficulty managing finances. Even for people not classified as 'special needs,' different kinds of assistance and financial support are often required to ensure they can live independently, thereby reducing the risk of becoming homeless again.

In the case of people leaving medical institutions, the type of support services needed includes support within transitional housing or group homes or services with an emphasis on community outreach, home care, counselling or housekeeping.

Other homeless or low-income groups require support services that will help them achieve some stability in their housing arrangements. These supports are wide-ranging. The Task Force's public forum and focus groups brought forward significant concern about security deposits.* For many people, security deposits are a significant impediment to securing and keeping affordable housing. Many potential tenants cannot afford the security deposit required for rental accommodation; in other cases, security deposits are not administered or refunded according to regulations. Landlords are sometimes reluctant to venture into low-income housing because of potential difficulties with deposits and damage.

For other people, assistance with transportation costs could make it possible to live outside the inner-city where

> *"Our building is not big enough to meet the needs. Night after night we have to turn people away."*
>
> – Sedrick Vassell
> Inner-City Mission

* See "Security Deposit" definition in Section 5, "Definitions", page 42.

accommodation may be more readily available. Enhancement of drop-in child care for the homeless or sheltered homeless would particularly help caregivers who are unable to look for housing or employment because of their family obligations. The need for financial management assistance was also mentioned in the focus groups as a much-needed support.

Enhancing supports that exist, increasing the availability of overtaxed services and filling the gaps would ensure a continuum of care approach to services – and save efforts and resources in the long run.

LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Recommendation:

4. **Engage the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing to lead implementation of the Task Force's recommendations. The Committee should review and expand its mandate and membership to ensure it functions as a decision-making body with adequate diversity of representation to carry out the required work.**

   Specificactions:

   4.1 Provincial and City members should be senior officials, such as Assistant Deputy Minister level or equivalent, to ensure decision-making ability.

   4.2 Form an agreement and a budget to provide the administrative supports needed to carry out the work of the Committee, including a Housing Initiatives Coordinator. The coordinator would be co-funded by the three levels of government and accountable to the EJPCOH to support the Committee in implementing the recommendations. The budget would also cover implementation costs for such activities as the count, survey and database as outlined below.

   4.3 Develop an action plan for implementation of the recommendations, including measures of success.

   4.4 Continue to conduct the homeless count initiated by the Task Force as a means of identifying and monitoring trends among the homeless. Follow-up counts are recommended for late August 1999, March and August 2000 and every second year thereafter.

4.5 Conduct a homeless survey to find out more about the homeless — demographics, characteristics, causes of homelessness, etc., within a year of this report. Include tracking of a few individuals to assess services used and costs involved.

4.6 Implement and maintain a computerized database of housing and services.

4.7 Undertake an advocacy/education role to assist the homeless, change public attitudes and build understanding and support.

4.8 As a longer-term objective, consider partnerships and joint ventures among facilities to create an even better organization of existing agencies.

4.9 Account for progress on established measures at least annually to the City of Edmonton, Alberta Family and Social Services, Alberta Municipal Affairs and the Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness.

The Task Force sees the need for quick, collaborative action on its recommendations and believes that engaging an existing organization with proven capability will be the best approach. The Task Force recommends the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing (EJPCOH) for this role: the Committee has a proven track record from previous housing initiatives and continues to meet regularly. One of the major roles of the EJPCOH will be to determine how, and for which specific low-income priority needs groups, the additional 500 housing units identified in Recommendation No. 2 will be provided over each of the next five years.

A review and strengthening of the Committee's mandate and membership will ensure it has the authority to be a quick-acting, decision-making body and add to its credibility. The Task Force also suggests that Assistant Deputy Minister or equivalent level of representation is needed to ensure decisions can be made and action taken. Expansion of membership to include significant representation of the Aboriginal community would also be beneficial. Given that homeless issues are not restricted to the City's boundaries, a regional focus could also be considered in the future.

Providing a budget for the EJPCOH's expanded role will be an important step in ensuring it can realistically

> *"We play a significant role in prevention. If not for the programs offered, many of the people we serve would be homeless today."*
>
> — Gerry Raymond
> Excel Resources Society

accomplish its objectives. Hiring of a Housing Initiatives Coordinator will also be essential. The Coordinator would provide administrative support and coordinate the implementation of such activities as the homeless count, survey and database.

The Task Force suggests a number of activities for the Committee. In addition to continuing the count, and conducting a survey to find out more information about the homeless, development of a computerized database is recommended. The database could include lists of housing providers and up-to-date vacancy status reports, as well as lists of service providers such as mental health or addiction counselling agencies. It would be accessible to all management bodies and non-profit organizations and, through them, to individuals in need of affordable housing or related services. Specifics of the database should be determined through a collaborative process to ensure it meets the needs that exist.

The need for advocacy on behalf of the homeless and education of the public also was emphasized throughout the Task Force's focus groups and public forum. Racism and discrimination were often cited as barriers to accessing affordable housing, which will only be overcome through changing society's attitudes.

EJPCOH would also receive any additional feedback and input that is likely to come after dissolution of the Edmonton Task Force on Homelessness.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Recommendation:

5. **Review Supports for Independence (SFI) policies of Family and Social Services, with the intention of ensuring they provide sufficient support to meet recipients' housing needs.**

Specific actions:

5.1 Improve the provincial shelter allowance to allow people to obtain adequate housing in the marketplace. Revise current policy from providing one blanket rate across the province to having community-specific rates that reflect current market rents. For example, establish shelter allowances

based on a portion of the average market rent (say 85%) for each community using annual rental rate surveys.

5.2 Look at alternative ways of ensuring security deposits aren't a hindrance to securing housing for SFI recipients. One such option is reinstatement of the policy of paying security deposits for all SFI recipients.

5.3 Consider a policy that SFI will be provided to people with no fixed address.

5.4 Examine age restrictions on the shelter allowance, so that youths under age 18 living without family support may qualify.

The Task Force often was told at the Public Forum that inadequate Supports for Independence benefits present a real barrier for low-income recipients wanting or attempting to maintain affordable housing, especially in larger urban centres and high growth communities. For example, the payment of the same shelter allowance across the province doesn't account for rents that vary widely by community.

Public Forum participants noted that low SFI payments are inadequate to meet basic expenses. Either there is not enough left for shelter, or often money needed for other basics (such as food) ends up going to cover accommodation costs.

As recommended in the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing report: *"Recommended Actions for the Short-Term Plan (1998-1999) and the Long-Term Plan (1999-2001) for Housing in Edmonton"*, more extensive and flexible supports would enhance access to housing for many Albertans.

Recommendation:

6. Review current social housing policies managed by Alberta Municipal Affairs.

Specific actions:

6.1 Consider a graduated formula for Rents Geared to Income, rather than the standard by which all individuals or families pay 30% of their gross income toward rent.

6.2 Ensure policies support a transition from subsidized to non-subsidized housing.

> *"We are here to house the 'hard-to-house.' We don't ask for references or credit references. We try to be flexible as possible about security deposits."*
>
> – Paul Sinclair
> Metis Urban Housing

The public forum and focus groups also provided an opportunity for people to emphasize to the Task Force the need for more flexibility in the Rents Geared to Income formula. The 30% across-the-board approach can create problems for some families, particularly those at the far end of the low-income spectrum, large families or those with additional medical expenses. 30% of the average $8,000 low-income in Edmonton (as compared to $15,000 in Calgary) leaves very little income for other basic living expenses. A graduated approach, with rents adjusted according to income, would be more realistic.

Innovative ideas to encourage transition out of subsidized housing also need to be encouraged and explored. For example, a portion of tenants' rent could be put into an account to assist them when they leave subsidized housing.

FUNDING

Recommendation:

7. **Support the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund as a mechanism to generate predictable, sustainable and dedicated funding to meet affordable housing needs in Edmonton.**

   Specific actions:

   7.1 Reinvest in housing the City of Edmonton's annual savings arising from eliminated subsidies for provincial social housing, which in 1998 was $1.3 million and in some cases would have continued for 30 years. This would bring the City back to its base level from which additional funding could be determined. The funds would be contributed to the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund to assist in development of the housing units specified in Recommendation No.2, and would be matched by the provincial and federal governments.

   7.2 Designate a percentage from the sale of city and provincial-owned land to the development of low-income housing, and contribute it to the Trust Fund to assist with the development of 500 additional housing units annually (Recommendation No. 2).

   7.3 Engage the private sector in matching the funds dedicated by governments to additional housing projects.

Housing trusts are a proven model for financing affordable housing. As community-based initiatives, they are widely used in the United States and are being established in five Canadian cities (Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Montreal, St. John and Calgary).

In Edmonton, the Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness (ECHO) initiated the Housing Trust Fund. Alberta Municipal Affairs, the City of Edmonton, Capital Region Housing Corporation and Greater Edmonton Home Builders Association participate on its steering committee. It is now being formalized into a legal entity. When operating, it will provide a range of assistance: housing providers may receive bridge financing or development capital, while individual households may be offered direct assistance through rent supplements or repayable loans. Emphasis will be on those most in need.

Calls for the City of Edmonton to return previous housing subsidy funds to housing came from all areas of the Task Force's research; this would provide an opportunity for the City to support the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund. In 1998, through remortgaging of social housing mortgage debt, the provincial government eliminated the requirement for municipal subsidies toward provincial-owned family social housing. In Edmonton, the saving was approximately $1.3 million in 1998; in some cases, the savings continue annually for the next 30 years. The province suggested municipalities reinvest the savings to meet low-income housing needs. Instead, the City of Edmonton did not earmark the funds for housing but rather put it back into general revenue. The indirect impact of the savings is larger than face-value in view of the potential ability of those funds to leverage other funds. In Calgary for example, the City leveraged its savings from the same source into $4.4 million and established a trust fund.

Reinvestment of this historic level of funding to housing would send a clear message to the community, as well as to other levels of government and private industry, that the City takes the housing issue seriously. Provincial and federal governments should be encouraged to match the City's contribution to the fund, as a start toward funding the housing needs of Edmonton.

> *"Home has many meanings for Aboriginals... personal safety and security, cultural identity. Home provides space for all members to be accommodated. With extended families, elders have contact with the children."*
>
> – Geordy Saulteaux
> Amisk Housing Association

The Trust Fund also provides a valuable community-based mechanism to solicit donations from the private sector. The Fund needs to develop "champions" within the business community who will raise the profile of the issue and bring the private sector on board.

Recommendation:

8. **Urge the three levels of government – federal, provincial, municipal – to commit additional funding to meet the housing and support needs in Edmonton as outlined in the previous recommendations.**

   Specific actions:

   8.1 Agree to funding levels and clarification of roles in housing for each level of government within a Memorandum of Understanding.

   8.2 Support the national initiative to establish a national housing policy.

   The Task Force repeatedly heard that tremendous capability exists in the Edmonton community – non-profit and private – to collaborate and put ideas into action. Implementation is a funding issue. The community has the energy and the interest in making progress happen, but needs assistance with the resources to do so. It became clear through input to the Task Force that funding low-income affordable housing is principally the responsibility of governments.

A commitment to funding and clarification of roles and accountability in housing needs to be formalized, clearly articulated and agreed to by the three levels of government.

Each level of government has a role to play:

- Federal government: Its responsibilities come primarily in the areas of capital assistance for new construction and rehabilitation of existing affordable housing. Because it is largely responsible for Aboriginals, the federal government should also fund projects to prevent and reduce homelessness within that group.
- Provincial government: The province has the constitutional responsibility for housing. There is a public expectation that the province will exercise its responsibility and provide policy and funding leadership in housing. Homelessness is largely caused by poverty and the province also is responsible for income maintenance and support programs. Because

the homeless population has a high incidence of health, mental health and addictions problems, the province has a key role to play in funding supportive programs and enhancing access to health care.

- Municipal government: The need for leadership from the City of Edmonton was often mentioned by the Task Force's focus groups. Areas for municipal involvement include property tax incentives, per unit grants for construction of new affordable rental housing, more flexible bylaws to allow innovative use of existing housing stock such as secondary suites and fees on new development to assist with new affordable rental housing.

Efforts to establish a national housing policy will help provide the needed clarification of roles and accountability by all levels of government in housing. Examples of initiatives underway are the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) Housing Policy Statement and the *National Housing Policy Options Paper* of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Big City Mayors Caucus. Both of these policy statements recognize that all three levels of government must be involved in housing and recommend specific senior government roles. With government leadership, the community-based, non-profit and business sectors will then help implement projects, provide some funding or services-in-kind and continue the collaborative efforts for which they're known in Edmonton.

> ***"Support has to go hand-in-hand with the housing."***
>
> – Heidie Velluw
> Operation Friendship

5. Definitions

Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing (EJPCOH)

The Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing is a broad-based committee of representatives from all three levels of government, community agencies and private industry that focuses on issues surrounding low-income and special housing needs. Established in 1991, the Committee's approved plans have resulted in the development of a wide range of housing projects and related initiatives targeted to Edmonton's highest priority low-income and special housing (including homeless) needs.

Hard-to-house

Hard-to-house persons are individuals or families whose often multi-problem lifestyles make them extremely difficult to house. Problems experienced by these persons often include substance abuse, mental illness and/or unpredictable behaviours.

Homeless

The Task Force established the following definition of the homeless for its work.

- **Absolute homeless:** Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives). During the March 18 count, this was represented by people who, when asked on the street or within agencies like drop-in centres or the food bank, self-reported that they had no permanent place to reside. They may have ended up sleeping 'on the street' or in a stairwell that night, or alternatively they may have stayed with a friend or found an emergency shelter space.

- **Sheltered homeless:** Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay).
  During the March 18 count, this was represented by people who were registered to stay in approved emergency shelters.

Housing Trust Fund

Housing trust funds are community-based initiatives, used to raise funds that are dedicated to the financing of affordable

housing. Funds are generally collected from all levels of government as well as the private sector and broad community. Funds are used to assist housing providers as well as individual households. For example, bridge financing or development capital may be provided for a housing provider, whereas an individual may qualify for such direct assistance as rent supplements or repayable loans. Housing trust funds are led by community-based boards of directors. All three levels of government are the designated beneficiaries of any funds remaining upon dissolution. The Edmonton Housing Trust Fund is in the formative stages and is being formalized into a legal entity. When operating, the fund will place emphasis on meeting the highest priority needs.

Housing units

Housing units is a broad term that represents the full spectrum of options for affordable accommodation. It encompasses the full range: mats or beds in emergency shelters, short-term transitional housing, special needs housing, long-term low-income affordable accommodation – and everything in between.

Security Deposit

A security deposit is a safety net for landlords. A security deposit (also known as damage deposit) is money, often equal to the first month's rent, or something of value that a tenant gives to a landlord at the start of a tenancy period. The landlord gives the security deposit back to the tenant when the tenant moves out. If the tenant damages the place, doesn't clean it or moves out without paying the rent, the landlord can keep part of the security deposit.

Special needs/supportive housing

This type of housing serves the needs of people who require support services and/or physical design in addition to the housing itself. Examples include supervised, lodge-type accommodation for seniors or group homes for the mentally ill. Services are generally provided by staff support persons who provide the care or supervision required to help the residents live as independently as possible.

> *"The Community expects all three levels of government to support it. We in the community are willing to do our part."*
>
> – Martin Garber-Conrad
> Edmonton City-Centre
> Church Corp.

6. APPENDICES: *Input Toward Action*

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"Don't forget the people."

– Gary Trudell

former homeless person

Homelessness in Edmonton

A Call to Action

SUMMARY

The first official count of the homeless in Edmonton found 836 homeless* persons in the city. Of these, 313 were absolute homeless – having no housing alternative – and 523 were sheltered homeless – living in emergency accommodations.

The Edmonton Task Force on Homelessness organized the count to provide a current 'snapshot'of the homeless population and to establish a baseline against which changes in the homeless population can be monitored. March 18, 1999 was selected as count day because it was a winter weekday. The community serving the homeless, as well as many volunteers, helped the Task Force partners conduct the count.

- About 70 families were counted, encompassing 112 children under the age of 18 and 91 caregivers. Among the families, 55% of the individuals were absolute homeless, while 45% stayed at shelters.

- A majority of the homeless were single – 633 of the 836 total. Among them, 32% were absolute homeless compared with 68% staying at shelters.

- From the perspective of gender, most of the homeless were male (73% or 530, not counting children in families) and 27% or 194 were female. Among both males and females, more individuals were sheltered than absolute homeless. There was a higher proportion of females than males in the number of absolute homeless.

* **Definition:**
The Task Force established the following definition of the homeless for its work.

- **Absolute homeless:** Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives).
  During the March 18 count, this was represented by people who, when asked on the street or within agencies like drop-in centres or the food bank, self-reported that they had no permanent place to reside. They may have ended up sleeping 'on the street' or in a stairwell that night, or alternatively they may have stayed with a friend or found an emergency shelter space.

- **Sheltered homeless:** Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay).
  During the March 18 count, this was represented by people who were registered to stay in approved emergency shelters.

Appendix 1

Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton

conducted by the

Edmonton Task Force on Homelessness

March 18, 1999

Homelessness in Edmonton
A Call to Action

- Slightly more than half (53%) were observed to be Caucasian followed by 42% Aboriginal and 5% "other." Most Caucasians were sheltered whereas slightly more than half of all Aboriginals were absolute homeless.

- Age groups ranged from the majority being adults (561 or 67% between 19 and 54 years) to the next largest group being children (112 or 13%), 87 youth (10%) and 76 seniors (9%) age 55 years or over.

- A count of people turned away by providers and crisis services identified 113, while an additional 32 individuals were discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but without a permanent residence.

The Task Force recommends that the count be continued on a regular basis to monitor trends among the homeless.

BACKGROUND

The Edmonton Task Force on Homelessness determined in late 1998 that a count of homeless persons in Edmonton would be an important step in fulfilling its terms of reference. The count would serve two purposes:

1. Provide a current snapshot of the homeless population, its size and characteristics.
2. Provide a baseline against which changes in the homeless population can be monitored.

As with all of the task force's work, the following definition of the homeless was used:
"1. Individuals and families who are absolutely homeless (having no housing alternatives) and
"2. Individuals and families who are the sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations or condemned housing and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay)."

March 18, 1999 was count day — a winter weekday.

Organizing and implementing the count involved all task force partners: the City of Edmonton, Alberta Family and Social Services, Alberta Municipal Affairs and the community serving the homeless as well as many volunteers.

METHOD

Preparations for the formal count began with a trial run on February 18, 1999. The trial led to changes and a finalized methodology for the actual count.

The method included a direct and indirect count to ensure as much thoroughness and accuracy as possible.

The **direct count** involved:

- count of people in emergency shelter beds

The **indirect count** attempted to capture the invisible homeless through:

- ***street and 'snowball' count***, asking people on the street:
  - if they have a permanent residence to return to that night
  - how many people they know who don't have a permanent residence on that night
- ***agency count***, asking people at agencies (such as the food bank and drop-in centres) if they have a permanent residence for that night
- ***turnaway count*** of people turned away by providers and crisis services because no appropriate housing was available
- ***discharge count*** of people either discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but with no permanent residence to go to

Demographics gathered during the count included gender, observed race and age. Family status (whether single or a family) was also documented; number of caregivers, single or multi-caregiver, and number of children were captured for families.

Participants faxed the results of their counts, documented on two forms, to a central number the next day.

The 'snowball' count is not reflected in the count results because of its unreliability. However, a high percentage of interviewed people indicated they knew many other homeless people.

The Task Force acknowledges that the count has inherent limitations and notes it is a point-in-time estimate. The data could be an under-representation of the actual number of homeless persons in Edmonton. For example, the count may not have included those who stayed with friends or family on the day of the count, and did not include people living in condemned housing. For safety reasons, on the advice of the Edmonton Police Service, condemned housing properties were not accessed for the count. At the same time, some people could have been counted twice. Nevertheless, as the first official count of the homeless in Edmonton, the Task Force sees it as an important step forward.

Implementation of the count relied on the cooperation and involvement of the community serving the homeless and a team of volunteers. The community was sub-divided into 15 groups, with a coordinator assigned to each:

- institutions (hospitals)
- inner-city agencies
- street
- shelters (adult and families)
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
- mental health homes and shelters
- adult group homes
- youth group homes

- youth shelters
- seniors facilities
- subsidized housing
- aboriginal agencies and housing
- malls
- food banks
- other miscellaneous crisis and assistance services

COUNT RESULTS

A total of 836 homeless persons were counted on March 18, 1999 in Edmonton: 313 absolute homeless (37 %) and 523 sheltered homeless (63 %). This includes singles as well as the adults and children within families.

TOTAL HOMELESS		
	NO.*	%*
ABSOLUTE HOMELESS	313	37%
SHELTERED HOMELESS	523	63%
TOTAL HOMELESS	836	100%

* INCLUDES - SINGLES, ADULTS IN FAMILIES AND CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

Family status

A majority of individuals counted were single. Among the single homeless, 202 (32%) were absolutely homeless compared with 431 (68%) who were staying at shelters.

SINGLE HOMELESS		
	NO.*	%*
ABSOLUTE HOMELESS	202	32%
SHELTERED HOMELESS	431	68%
TOTAL HOMELESS	633	100%

* INCLUDES SINGLES WITHOUT CHILDREN

About 70 families were counted, encompassing 112 children under the age of 18 and 91 caregivers. Among families, 55% of the individuals were absolutely homeless, while 45% stayed at shelters. There were 61 children and 50 caregivers among the absolute

homeless; 51 children and 41 caregivers among the sheltered homeless families.

Families were almost equally divided between having one caregiver (48) or multi-caregivers (43). Among the absolute homeless, 24 families had one caregiver while approximately 13 had two-or-more caregivers. At shelters, three-quarters (24) of the families had one caregiver while about 8 had two-or-more caregivers. Caregivers included men, women and seniors.

HOMELESS IN FAMILIES

	CAREGIVERS BY CATEGORY			CHILDREN			TOTAL	
	2 OR MORE	%	SINGLE	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
ABSOLUTE HOMELESS	26	13%	24	12%	61	30%	111	55%
SHELTERED HOMELESS	17	8%	24	12%	51	25%	92	45%
TOTAL HOMELESS	43	21%	48	24%	112	55%	203	100%

Gender

Three-quarters (73%) of the homeless were male, totalling 530 compared to 194 females. Sheltered males accounted for 50% of the total counted. Among both males and females, more individuals were sheltered than absolute homeless. In females, though, a higher proportion was absolute homeless; almost half of all women compared to about one-third of all males were absolute homeless.

HOMELESS BY GENDER

	MALES		FEMALES		TOTAL	
	NO.*	%*	NO.*	%*	NO.*	&*
ABSOLUTE HOMELESS	165	23%	87	12%	252	35%
SHELTERED HOMELESS	365	50%	107	15%	472	65%
TOTAL HOMELESS	530	73%	194	27%	724	100%

* DOES NOT INCLUDE CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

Race

Through observations, only 5% of the homeless were not classified as being either Caucasian or Aboriginal. Caucasians formed the highest percentage (53%), while 42% were observed as Aboriginal. Most Caucasians were sheltered (301 compared to 84 absolute homeless), whereas slightly more than half of all Aboriginals were absolute homeless (164 compared to 143 sheltered).

Among the absolute homeless, the majority were Aboriginal (164) compared to 384% Caucasian. The opposite held for the sheltered homeless, with the majority (301) being Caucasian compared to 143 Aboriginal.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED RACE

	CAUC.*		ABORIG.*		OTHER		TOTAL	
	NO.*	&*	NO.*	&*	NO.*	&*	NO.*	&*
ABSOLUTE HOMELESS	84	12%	164	23%	4	1%	252	35%
SHELTERED HOMELESS	301	42%	143	20%	28	4%	472	65%
TOTAL HOMELESS	385	53%	307	42%	32	5%	724	100%

* DOES NOT INCLUDE CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

Age

Adults between 19 and 54 years old were the predominant age group among the homeless, at 561 or 67%. The next largest group was children (112 at 13%), then youth 15 to 18 years (87 at 10%) and seniors (76 at 9%).

For children, the majority (61 of 112) were absolute homeless compared to 51 sheltered. Among all other age groups, a higher percentage were sheltered rather than absolute homeless. Among seniors, almost all (69 out of 76) were sheltered. Among adults, more than two-thirds (343 of 561) were sheltered. About two-thirds of counted youth were sheltered (60 of 87).

In both the absolute homeless and the sheltered homeless groups, about two-thirds of the individuals were adults. Children accounted for a higher proportion of the absolute homeless than the sheltered, whereas seniors were a higher proportion among the sheltered.

HOMELESS BY AGE CATEGORY*										
	CHILDREN		YOUTH		ADULT		SENIOR		TOTAL	
	NO.	&	NO.	&	NO.	&	NO.	&	NO.	&
ABSOLUTE HOMELESS	61	7%	27	3%	218	26%	7	1%	313	37%
SHELTERED HOMELESS	51	6%	60	7%	343	41%	69	8%	523	63%
TOTAL HOMELESS	112	13%	87	10%	561	67%	76	9%	836	100%

* CHILDREN (IN FAMILIES). YOUTH = 15-18YRS. ADULT = 19 - 54 YRS. SENIOR = 55+ YRS.

Turnaways and Discharges

A tally was also taken of the number of people denied a bed because the facility was full or the client didn't meet entrance standards (by, for example, exhibiting violent behavior) and who declared having no home to return to. On count day, 113 individuals were turned away from housing providers (56%) and shelters (44%). Discharges totalled 32 people, including 91% from jails, hospitals or group homes and 9% from shelters. These people were not knowingly included in the absolute or sheltered homeless count.

COUNT OF TURNAWAYS AND DISCHARGES				
	TURNAWAYS		DISCHARGES	
	NO.*	%*	NO.*	%*
HOUSING PROVIDERS	63	56%		
JAILS/HOSP/GRP HOMES			29	91%
SHELTERS	50	44%	3	9%
TOTAL	113	100%	32	100%

* TURNAWAYS AND DISCHARGES DECLARING NO HOME TO RETURN TO

Shelter-by-shelter numbers: registered and turnaways

The number of homeless who were housed or turned away by each participating shelter on March 18 is outlined in the table below. Herb Jamieson Centre housed the highest number, at 158 (30%); George Spady Shelter turned away the highest number, at 15 (30%).

REGISTERED AND TURNAWAYS FROM SHELTERS						
SHELTER NAME:	AVAIL. SPACES	NO. REGSTRED	% OCCUP.	% OF TTL REGISTRED	NO. TRND. AWY	% OF TOTAL
HERB JAMIESON CTR.	176	158	90%	30%	0	0%
W.E.A.C.	62	61	98%	12%	0	0%
SALLY ANN. - MATS	20	19	95%	4%	9	18%
GRGE SPADY - SHELTER	62	88	142%	17%	15	30%
URBAN MANOR	62	62	100%	12%	7	14%
WIN 1	20	19	95%	4%	14	28%
WIN 11	25	25	100%	5%	5	10%
LURANA SHELTER	25	20	80%	4%	0	0%
SAFE HOUSE	6	10	167%	2%	0	0%
PROT. SAFE HOUSE	5	4	80%	1%	0	0%
S.F.I. HOTELS	??	9	??	2%	0	0%
INNER CITY YOUTH	20	11	55%	2%	0	0%
YOUTH EMERG. SHLTR	28	21	75%	4%	0	0%
YOUTH RECEIVING	??	16	??	3%	0	0%
TOTAL	511	523	98%	100%	50	100%

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The Task Force recommends that the count be continued on a regular basis so trends can be monitored.

The recommended schedule for future counts is:

- late August 1999
- March and August 2000
- every second year thereafter

Experience from the March 18 count also led to recommendations for improvements in methodology and documentation. Two main areas for change are (1) lead time and (2) youth count. More lead time would greatly improve coordination and thoroughness. Changes to how the youth count is taken, by involving other agencies and exploring other options, would increase the representativeness of that data. More extensive involvement with the Edmonton Police Service and agencies within malls also needs to be explored.

In conjunction with improvements, the same process should be used as much as possible to ensure consistency of results.

THANKS TO THE COMMUNITY:

The Task Force thanks the many agencies and individuals who helped with the count.

SUMMARY

The Edmonton Task Force on Homelessness organized a public forum on April 9, 1999 as part of its information-gathering process. Twenty-one presenters spoke to the Task Force, representing a diverse sample of the people involved with homelessness – from homeless people to non-profit housing organizations to specific target group associations — and providing a wide range of perspectives. Seven additional papers were provided following the forum.

Presenters tended to focus on two things:
1. **Issues** involved with or contributing to homelessness.
2. **Solutions** that could reduce homelessness.

In the full day of presentations, speakers had 20 minutes each to present their views and answer questions from Task Force members. Many participants provided written documents to supplement their presentations. A list of participants is provided at the end of this report.

Four low-income groups were mentioned within a number of presentations as being particularly affected by housing issues:
- Aboriginals
- families with children
- mentally ill
- hard-to-house seniors

Within the diversity of participants, common themes emerged. Issues influencing the homeless and affordable housing included:
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of financial supports to help low-income people obtain affordable housing
- Lack of government commitment and the political will to focus on housing
- The need for more coordination among agencies and service departments
- Cultural and societal factors including racism and safety concerns

Proposed solutions could also be grouped into five main categories:
- The need for leadership from three levels of government primarily, then the community
- Capital funding for new developments and renovations, as well as funding at the support level; in particular, reinvestment of the City of Edmonton's saved $1.3 million into housing
- Development of more assisted or affordable housing of all types
- Target-group specific solutions for Aboriginal, families with children, mentally ill and hard-to-house seniors
- Education to change deep-rooted prejudices and attitudes within society.

Appendix 2

Report on the Public Forum on Homelessness

Sponsored by

Edmonton Task Force on Homelessness

April 9, 1999

ISSUES PRESENTED

Issues that contribute to or affect the homeless and affordable housing fell into five main categories:

- Housing
- Financial
- Government commitment
- Agency coordination
- Cultural/societal

HOUSING

Presenters who addressed this issue all agreed: lack of affordable housing is the root of the problem. Evidence of the lack comes through

- low vacancy rates
- long waiting lists
- 100% occupancy rates
- people living in shelters for extended periods.

Although speakers generally focused on long-term housing, their comments showed a lack of facilities at all levels – emergency shelters, group homes, crisis centres and social housing for example.

FINANCIAL

Financial supports do not adequately help people in need obtain affordable housing, speakers emphasized. Primary concerns included:

- inability to pay security (damage) deposits
- social assistance shelter payments that are too low to cover rent
- higher costs associated with Edmonton's economic revival
- lack of credit
- lack of awareness about eligibility for benefits
- persistent problems with poverty

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

Lack of the political will to make changes and focus on housing was mentioned in various ways. Many participants expressed concerns that policies within existing health care, social assistance and priority-setting processes at all levels of government do not adequately emphasize or support housing. Examples included:

- City of Edmonton's channeling of $1.3 million savings from housing into general revenue rather than housing
- shift from institutions to community care without adequate preparation and supports provided
- inadequate services to help the mentally ill

AGENCY COORDINATION

A few speakers highlighted the inefficiencies that currently exist within the existing public housing system and among Aboriginal organizations. They expressed concern about the lack of coordination among agencies and associated lack of long-range planning. Lack of coordination among service departments that deal with the poor, unemployed and homeless also was cited.

CULTURAL/SOCIETAL

Presenters often mentioned cultural and societal factors that contribute to or exacerbate homelessness, including:

- racism and discrimination against Aboriginals
- "not in my neighborhood" attitudes toward potential solutions
- attitudes toward people who look or act differently, often affecting the mentally ill
- safety concerns in inner-city neighborhoods
- lack of appreciation for cultural differences, such as Aboriginal extended families

SOLUTIONS PROPOSED

Presenters suggested many solutions to the issues surrounding homelessness. Consistently, the emphasis was on long-term solutions as opposed to short-term "quick" fixes.

Proposed solutions can be grouped into five main categories:

- Leadership
- Funding
- Housing
- Specific groups
- Societal/cultural

LEADERSHIP

Many presenters emphasized the need for leadership as an essential first step. From their comments, leadership could be interpreted as being necessary at many levels – from governments, agencies and community.

The highest level of leadership was seen to be needed from government. No single level of government was pinpointed as being the best to lead any efforts. Rather, participants urged all three levels – federal, provincial and municipal – to get involved, work together and make housing a priority.

A multi-dimensional approach to leadership was recommended. Formation of a group including the community and multi-levels of government was envisioned; names suggested included the Edmonton Housing Task Force or Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing. Such a group could build on the successful organization used when housing funding was provided years ago, with perhaps some additional representation. Edmonton's Safer Cities process – involving government, community and business — was also cited as an effective model.

Adequate funding by all levels of government was seen as a tangible sign of leadership; policies and programs that assist the poor, unemployed and homeless (such as damage deposit payments or increased shelter payments) would be interpreted the same way.

Speakers who addressed the issue suggested that business could not take a lead on housing. Rather, they suggested that after adequate funding is provided by government, then the business community could get involved through further financial assistance and involvement in implementing housing projects.

Partnerships and collaboration were seen to be essential at all levels. Coordination among agencies and programs that serve the homeless or poor would lead to greater efficiency and improved service. The potential for mergers or partnerships among agencies serving the homeless and Aboriginals was suggested.

FUNDING

Presenters emphasized that adequate funding and financial programs are needed along with leadership if any real improvements for the homeless are to occur.

Capital funding was seen as the first priority, for developing new or renovating existing buildings. The senior level of government (federal) needs to provide capital funds, speakers agreed. A speaker also recommended that all three government levels increase their spending on housing by 1%.

Re-investment toward low-cost housing of the City of Edmonton's $1.3 million saving from social housing was urged many times. Besides providing funding, this would also be seen as a sign of leadership, speakers implied.

A Housing Trust Fund model – used elsewhere in Canada and recently started in Edmonton – was mentioned and recommended by a few speakers. Such a fund, involving government, business and community, could provide a pool of capital that would ensure predictable sustainable funding to meet housing needs.

Government needs to help the housing problem by providing money, not getting involved in administration, a speaker noted.

Presenters made other specific recommendations related to funding at a support level:

- Raise shelter allowance levels to cover costs of rent.
- Cover damage deposits for people on social assistance.
- Provide a subsidy for people paying more than 35% of their incomes toward rent; subsidy would be for 90% of the difference.
- Reinstate tax credits for renters (particularly for the working poor and homeless).
- Make low-cost homes available to social service recipients, by allowing their incomes to qualify for mortgages.
- Increase the lodge assistance program to make the Provincial "per occupied unit grant" provided to the Greater Edmonton Foundation, equivalent to that received by other Senior's Lodge Foundations.

HOUSING

With adequate funding and leadership provided, development of more public housing should be possible, speakers asserted. They favored the provision of more public housing, recognizing that private developers will not fill the need.

One speaker suggested that a realistic start would be to add about 500 units for people with the highest need and lowest incomes. Housing of all types seemed to be required.

Specific suggestions included:

- Using vacant buildings (such as former Charles Camsell and General hospitals or vacant federal buildings)
- Converting vacant or under-used seniors' housing into low-cost housing
- Building more group homes and halfway houses for the Aboriginal community
- Developing low-cost housing for the poor and working poor

Representatives of various current housing providers indicated they had an ability to manage more housing if given financial assistance to develop it. A speaker also noted that other initiatives already underway, but not represented, require support.

SPECIFIC GROUPS

Suggestions that related to specific groups also were made during the public forum. In addition to the global recommendations already outlined in this report, some of the comments relating to specific target groups, both directly and indirectly relating to housing, included:

Aboriginal:

- Develop more transitional housing, shelters, family and student housing.
- Be sensitive to unique needs relating to extended families, students, transient population
- Develop a women's shelter.
- Develop two and three-bedroom units as permanent housing, not an emergency program.
- Pay attention to the need for student housing.

Families with children:

- Provide safe affordable housing.

Mental health:

- Improve community care; people shouldn't be released into the community without adequate plans and supports being available.
- Develop an outreach team of mental health professionals.
- Increase housing for discharged people able to go into supported living environments.
- Provide more group homes and half-way houses.
- Institute mandatory treatment, through community treatment orders, to help stop the 'revolving door syndrome'.
- Improve communication and coordination among health care and assisting professionals.

Hard-to-house seniors:

- Provide lodge care that really works (including health care).

SOCIETAL/CULTURAL

Problems will continue until some of the deep-rooted prejudices and attitudes within society are addressed., many speakers emphasized. They called on government to:

- Provide more education to encourage people to open their minds and change their attitudes about the mentally ill or Aboriginals.
- Educate people about housing and social needs in the community.
- Educate people against racism and discrimination.
- Involve people who are affected by policies in setting the policies.

PUBLIC FORUM PARTICIPANTS

	Agency Represented	Presenter
1	Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee	Valerie Kaufman, Assistant Executive Director
2	Excel Resources Society	Dr. Gerry Raymond, President John McGee, Chairman
3	Poverty in Action/Edmonton Social Planning Council	Lawrence Loyek
4	Edmonton Social Planning Council	Brian Bechtel, Executive Director
5	On behalf of several homeless	Edil Pirbhai
6	Quality of Life Commission	Frank Manzara, Chairman Don Mayne, Volunteer
7	Edmonton Community Foundation	Christopher Smith
8	Edmonton City-Centre Church Corporation	Martin Garber-Conrad, Executive Director
9	Alberta Mental Health Board	Richard Welch, Manager, Community Rehabilitation Services
10	Boyle Street Community Service (Housing Registry)	Janet Trottier, Social Practicum Student
11	Human Resources Canada	Monica Philips-Beck, Programs Outreach Officer
12	Inner-City Mission	Sedrick Vassell, Pastor
13	Schizophrenia Society	Sharon Springer, Executive Director
14	Landlord	Harry Satdeo
15	Has been homeless	Gary Trudell
16	Amisk Housing Association	Geordy Saulteaux, Treasurer
17	Edmonton Housing Trust Fund	Debbie Saidman, Executive Director
18	Poverty in Action	Deanna Shorten
19	Edmonton Inner-City Housing	Betty Farrell, Board Member Mary Amerongen, Project Manager
20	Metis Urban Housing	Paul Sinclair, President of the Board of Directors
21	Operation Friendship	Heidie Velluw, Community Liaison Coordinator

Written submissions only:

22	Inner-City Volunteer	Gloria Sawchuck
23	Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing	Sub-group
24	Metis Regional Council Zone IV	Stephen Montgomery
25	Inner City Pastoral Ministry	Reverend Faith Brace
26	Central Edmonton Community Land Trust	Emil van der Poorten, President
27	The George Spady Centre	Lorette Garrick, Executive Director
28	Joseph Whatman	

TASK FORCE REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FORUM

Gene Zwozdesky, MLA, Co-Chair

Jim Taylor, Councillor, Co-Chair

Lynn Hannley, Executive Director, The Communitas Group

Norm Palmer, Staff Supervisor, Urban Manor Housing Society

Lindsay Cherney, Executive Director, Urban Development Institute

Don Moulds, Senior Advisor - Assisted Housing, Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation

Ronald Odynski, Q.C., Managing Partner, Ogilvie and Company

Dennis Freeman, Director, Community Services, City of Edmonton

Gary Gordon, Manager, Housing Programs Policy and Research, Housing and Consumer Affairs Division, Alberta Municipal Affairs

Ken Gurski, Manager, Alberta Job Corps - Edmonton, Alberta Family and Social Services

Rob Martin, Regional Director, Housing and Consumer Affairs, North Field Services, Alberta Municipal Affairs

Appendix 3

Summary Report on Homelessness: A Review of Strategies and Best Practices

Prepared by

Converge Consulting Group

for the Edmonton Task Force on Homelessness

May, 1999

More detailed reports from the focus groups and best practices review are available upon request from:
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Homelessness in Edmonton
A Call to Action

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Despite the diversity reflected in the jurisdictions examined, most jurisdictions demonstrated similar circumstances and conditions affecting homelessness. 28

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BACKGROUND

On November 16, 1998, the Mayor of Edmonton and the Ministers of Alberta Family and Social Services and Alberta Municipal Affairs formed a task force to deal with issues of the homelessness in Edmonton. The Edmonton Task Force on Homeless initiated a number of activities to support an improved understanding of the homeless, their numbers, needs, barriers faced with the intent of developing strategies to address the issue.

One of these initiatives was a review of the literature and identification of best practices combined with a data gathering process targeted at Edmonton's agencies dealing with homelessness.. This report presents the findings of this research.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This review had two specific tasks assigned. Specifically, the objectives were to conduct a literature review of:

- "Homeless strategies developed by other Canadian jurisdictions", and
- "Best practices of homeless initiatives implemented in jurisdictions outside of Canada".

These were to be summarized in a "brief paper highlighting the successes achieved in other jurisdictions".

An additional objective was to gather data and information from the various agencies dealing with homelessness in Edmonton so as to get:

- Realistic appraisal of current circumstances within the community, and
- Identification of potential solutions that could help alleviate the problem.

As was the case with the initial objectives, the findings were to be summarized in this report.

Defining Homelessness

A critical context for the research is the specific definition of homeless. Different jurisdictions define homeless in different ways and as a result, the initiatives undertaken may serve very different target groups from those that are of immediate concern in Edmonton. For purposes of this study, the homeless are defined as:

1. Absolutely Homeless – having no housing alternatives; or
2. Sheltered Homeless those who are
   - Living in emergency accommodation
   - Living in transitional accommodation and ready for discharge but have no permanent residence to go to; and
   - Living in places not meant for human habitation.

The definition above provided guidance in terms of limiting the barriers and best practices that are discussed in this report.

Research Method

The intent of the research was to assess the state of knowledge and best practice concerning issues of homelessness. Where appropriate, this information could then be assessed as to its relevance to Edmonton and the potential for transferring best practice ideas to the local community.

Literature Review

To support this direction, materials were gathered from local libraries, resource agencies such as Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) in Canada and the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the United States as well as from centres currently engaged in addressing the issue such as Toronto and Calgary. In addition, internet searches were conducted and relevant materials acquired. Lastly, and where feasible, telephone calls were made to follow-up on materials acquired and to confirm success or failure of the projects concerned.

Through out the process, the research activity was guided by the definition of homeless in use in Edmonton but not restricted to it. Where appropriate, information was gathered on the range of activities used within a specific jurisdiction. This is because certain activities only make sense when viewed in the larger context of other supporting activities. In short, the data gathering approach was designed to gather material and information relevant to the Edmonton definition without compromising the integrity of the information gathered.

Agency Data Gathering

The second phase of the research effort was aimed at the agencies currently providing support to the homeless, directly or indirectly in Edmonton. A series of focus group interviews was also conducted to gather the insights, experiences and opinions of those working closely with the homeless. In all, over 50 people attended 8 workshops or focus group sessions designed to bring to the surface of the research, local conditions and factors affecting the issue.

The format of these focus groups was informal, with the aim of producing as much information as possible in a relatively short period of time. Each workshop lasted about 3 hours and consisted of two parts. The first part focused upon current issues, barriers or conditions that lead to homelessness or proved to be a problem for those that are homeless. The second focused upon solutions, attempting to identify both long term and short term initiatives that might be undertaken to address the issue.

In addition, a questionnaire was used to help augment the data gathered in the focus groups, providing those that were unable to attend an opportunity to have their say. In all, about 15 surveys were received.

Analytical Method

The results of both the literature review and the focus groups were combined to integrate the data. From this large base or inventory of information, common themes were identified. This allowed for the data to be structured around 'consensus areas' – areas that seemed to represent the current 'state of the art'.

Structure of This Report

The original research objective was to identify the current state of knowledge regarding issues of homelessness; barriers factors and the like, and secondly to identify best practices. The structure of this report reflects these objectives.

Focus on Conclusions

It also reflects the objective of boiling things down to reach some fundamental conclusions. Detailed descriptions of best practice initiatives as well as background research gathered as part of the literature review, is provided in the Appendix to this report. The report itself, however, focuses on the fundamental conclusions that can be drawn from this material.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The summary findings of this research is presented in three general areas. These are:

- **General/Systemic Conclusions.** The overall systemic findings that tended to hold true regardless of jurisdiction.
- **Conditions Affecting Homelessness.** The specific set of conditions that describe the homeless population or led to a homeless situation.
- **Strategies and Solutions.** The ideas and best practices that have defined efforts to improve the current situation and resolve issues of homelessness.

Each of these is discussed in turn.

GENERAL/SYSTEMIC CONCLUSIONS

Homelessness is not an Edmonton problem. It is a problem that exists in every jurisdiction and area from which information was gathered. This included jurisdictions across North America, the United Kingdom and Europe and Australia. These jurisdictions represent a diverse set of administrative profiles and conditions, yet for all this diversity, the nature of the problem and the current state of the art in terms of best practice, are remarkable similar.

Four basic conclusions can be drawn from a review of research conducted in these jurisdictions.

1. The homeless are not a homogenous group.

The homeless population, be it in England, Germany, Australia, Toronto or Edmonton, is not homogenous group. It only appears this way because the conditions that came together and affecting a specific individual yielded the same net effect – a homeless individual.

In fact, the homeless population is a diverse population, wherever one goes. Typically, they are differentiated across two fundamental dimensions;

1. **Demographic Characteristics,** especially age of the individual, gender, family status and special characteristics usually associated with particular group (in North America the two special groups identified are usually significant racial minorities including aboriginals and recent immigrants or refugees). For the most part these demographic distinctions are not made for convenience, but rather because of the very real differences in circumstances reflected in these categorizations.

2. **Factors Affecting Homelessness,** including the causes leading to homelessness and the set of conditions or characteristics that currently affect the individuals situation. These characteristics are numerous and not mutually exclusive of one another. They include mental and physical disabilities, drug and alcohol addiction, situations of family violence and the like.

The combination of these two fundamental dimensions of the homeless population yields a very diverse set of homeless populations. Many of these populations have more in common with 'mainstream' society than they do with each other.

2. Social support networks have evolved to reflect the diversity of the population.

For the most part, the social support system has evolved to reflect the diversity of the various homeless populations. Support and not for profit agencies have largely been designed around a specific demographic group, a specific factor or set of factors or both.

The result has been what often appears to be a patchwork set of agencies and programs each serving their own and often well defined population or target group. While this evolutionary process yields a high diversity of solutions, it has also produced well targeted and focused approaches to

address the similarly diverse set of needs and requirements of the broad homeless population.

In short, homelessness is generally recognized as an effect that arises from a diverse set of conditions. Agencies have tended to grown around the conditions targeting specific populations. This has led to very effective and efficient programs, but has also led to some populations falling between the cracks.

3. There is no single solution to homelessness.

The diversity of the homeless population, the differences in background, characteristics and the like, means there is no single solution to homelessness. The issue cannot be boiled down to one size fits all solutions like "build more shelters". This conclusion holds for all of the jurisdictions examined within the scope of this report.

This fundamental conclusion holds true for every jurisdiction for which data was available. Moreover, it is equally true for specific agency design. Agencies that try to help the homeless generally, be all things to all people, either remain ineffective or evolve over time to serve some specific homeless population. Single solutions, either for a jurisdiction or for a single agency design.

4. Best practices are changing to reflect diversity in populations

Best practices recognize the reality that no single solution to homelessness exists. Best practice is characterized more and more by:

1. **Diverse agency and program design.** Diversity in agencies and programming is encouraged, so long as the diversity is focused on the well defined needs of a specific target group. In other words, diversity in programming does not boil down to do anything you want. Rather, diversity in programming is encourage to the degree that it reflects the real needs and barriers facing specific homeless populations.

2. **Integrating mechanisms designed to network and coordinate.** Rather than try and control or direct efforts aimed at the homeless, best practice is emerging toward networking and coordinating the diverse set of agencies and programs at work in an effort to improve service delivery and make better use of existing resources.

CONDITIONS AFFECTING HOMELESSNESS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Why are people homeless? The search for solutions begins with an understanding of the causes and conditions of homelessness – understanding why and how people are, or have become, homeless.

In examining the conditions affecting homelessness, two basic dimensions can be identified;

- **Demographic Characteristics.** Those characteristics defining relative age, sex and marital/family status of the individual as well as membership in any specific high risk groups. Specific demographic groups of the homeless are:
  - Youth,
  - Families With Children,
  - Individual Adults Female,
  - Individual Adults Male,
  - Seniors,
  - Aboriginal,
  - Immigrants/Refugees.
- **Factors Affecting Homelessness;** Those characteristics that describe factors (causes or conditions) that may have contributed to the individual becoming homeless or that are important characteristics impacting the individuals ability to move out of homelessness.
  - Characteristics Attributable to the Individual Circumstances
    - Family Breakdown
    - Substance Abuse
    - Mental Disability

- Physical Disability
- Unemployed/Unemployable
- Poverty
- Life Skills

- Characteristics Attributable to the System/Structural Conditions
  - De-Institutionalized
  - Housing Affordability and Availability
  - Economic Conditions
  - Public Attitudes
  - Public Policy & Programs
  - Social Support Network

None of these characteristics or conditions are neatly mutually exclusive. Family breakdown, for example, is highly correlated with both single female and single parent (usually female) populations. But family breakdown can also produce or yield youth homeless and not all single female homeless can be characterized by circumstances of family breakdown or violence – substance abuse and other factors can also play a role.

In short, the interplay of causes and conditions with populations is not a nice clean set of one to one relationships.

Providing a summary overview of these causes and conditions along with their relationship with various populations is the function of the following tables.

Table: Factors Affecting Homelessness – Part 1: Characteristics & Barriers

Demographic Group	Description	Associated Characteristics	Unique Barriers
Youth	Youth typically refers to individual males and females between the ages of 15 to about 21 not accompanied by an adult guardian.	Family Breakdown Poor employable skills Poor life skills Poverty	The combination of family breakdown and leaving home (and therefore school) at an early age usually translates into a poor set of life and employable skills. ♦ Attitudes toward street life – as a legitimate alternative. Attitude, many youth have chosen life on the street as the best alternative they have. They may not be pre-disposed to seek any form of help in overcoming their homeless condition. Programmed solutions (agencies with some form of recovery program) will likely be avoided by these youth. ♦ Lack of employable skills because of early exit from educational environment. Youth homeless face a problem in trying to recover because so many do not have even the most basic of employable skills. ♦ Poor life skills because of poor modeling at home, limited exposure to appropriate role models. Many homeless youth have not had any socially acceptable role models and may simply lack the most basic of social interaction and related skills, further limiting eventual employment opportunities. ♦ Classification as prostitutes reduces access to support services. Those turning to prostitution as a source of income soon become branded with the label which in the longer term may limit their ability to take advantage of social supports.
Families With Children	A family of at least one guardian and one child anywhere from new born to about 18 years of age.	Family Breakdown Poor employable skills Poor life skills Poverty	♦ Insufficient day care alternatives. Without some form of day care, single parents are usually unable to search for or maintain employment or even look for housing alternatives. ♦ Transportation costs. Cheaper and more family oriented shelter is usually found outside the downtown core but transportation costs to services and employment usually increase outside the core. This combined with a need to find appropriate child care tends to reduce the ability of the adult to find accommodation, work or maintain either. ♦ Risk of losing children because of classification as homeless. Homeless families tend to avoid agency assistance for fear that doing so puts them at risk in having their children taken from them. ♦ Limited employment skills and opportunities. The structured hours of most day care facilities makes it more difficult for people to find work especially as many lower skilled jobs require shift work or the commitment to variable and unstructured hours. ♦ Relatively large demands of single parenthood. Parenthood presents its own set of demands and constraints not the least of which are the simple increased costs of maintaining a family. ♦ Increased housing needs. The presence of a child places increased demands on both agency

			accommodation as well as upon any private accommodation an individual may be seeking. What is suitable for a single male of 40 years may not at all be suitable for a young homeless mother with a three year old daughter. These increased requirements pose their own unique barriers to finding either agency help or locating private sector accommodation.
Individual Adults Female	Usually adults over the age of 21. The rate of female homelessness tends to be lower for females than for males. The reasons are unclear but may include female retention of primary residence after family breakup and the ability of females to take advantage of informal shelter alternatives, ie; staying with friends or relatives.	Family Breakdown Poor employable skills Poor life skills Poverty Substance Abuse Mental Illness or Disability Physical Illness or Disability	♦ Classification (as prostitutes) reduces access to support services. Single females working as prostitutes often face barriers arising from their classification as prostitutes. This may present a host of impediments to longer term solutions. ♦ Victims of domestic violence often have no alternatives – shelters are filled to capacity. Women leaving abusive relationships often simply have no other place to go – their choices are the street or stay within the relationship. The largest barrier may be simply a lack of facilities that would allow the individual a chance at recovery and rebuilding their situation. ♦ Relatively poor employable skill sets. For many women, the lack of more advanced training or schooling results in a relatively poor employable skill set. This in turn presents barriers related to economic opportunity.
Individual Adults Male	Usually adults over the age of 21. This is generally regarded as the largest single group of the homeless.	Substance Abuse Mental Illness or Disability Physical Illness or Disability Poverty Poor employable skills Poor life skills Family Breakdown	♦ High levels of multiple factors including mental disabilities, addiction and lack of employable skills. Many of the single male homeless suffer from multiple influencing factors making recovery programs more difficult and the barriers to recovery more numerous. These may also include criminal records that further add to the difficulty in recovery. ♦ Stigma associated with mental illness - 20 to 40% of homeless single males. The relatively high presence of mental illness or disability with this population presents its own set of barriers including inability to hold a job, inability to use basic life skills and disruptive or even violent behavior. ♦ Growing incidents of homeless HIV/AIDS patients – stigma associated with AIDS. An ever increasing number of the homeless, especially single males, are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. This in turn produces significant problems and barriers for those seeking agency assistance in gaining shelter. Some shelters are ill equipped to provide what additional support may be required.

Demographic Group	Description	Associated Characteristics	Unique Barriers
Seniors	The seniors demographic usually refers to homeless individuals over the age of 50.	Poverty Mental Illness or Disability Physical Illness or Disability Substance Abuse Poverty	♦ Diminished physical and mental capabilities. With increased age comes diminished physical and mental capacity which can be further aggravated by a life on the street. The combination of disabilities/illnesses makes it difficult for many to find alternative shelter. Some fall between the cracks in the care system, not sick enough to warrant institutional care, not well enough to survive on their own. Moreover, physical problems, especially wheelchairs, may limit the ability of an agency to take in the individual as not all agencies are wheelchair accessible. ♦ Public acceptance of the problem, many groups find it difficult to accept that the problem exists. There is a shared belief in society that no senior should be homeless, a belief that flies in the face of existing reality. The belief that the required social supports are in place to prevent seniors becoming homeless presents a problem for those seniors that are indeed homeless.
Aboriginals	These are individuals of aboriginal descent either with or without treaty recognition. The aboriginal population, while not the largest, is generally regarded to be the most over represented of all the demographic groups – that is they have the highest homeless rate.	Substance Abuse Poverty Poor employable skills Poor life skills	♦ Cultural and racial discrimination. Aboriginal populations face discrimination in both employment and housing opportunities. Many see trouble when they see an aboriginal individual. ♦ Urban natives failing to fit within either cultures (urban/white or native traditional). Aboriginals are not necessarily a single homogenous group. Urban natives represent an important sub-population that does not necessarily fit within either traditional aboriginal culture or the culture of urban white society. As a result, they fit in neither and face barriers from both directions – uncomfortable in seeking assistance from white or aboriginal agencies. ♦ High level of multiple factors including substance abuse and addiction, poor skill sets and family breakdown. The native homeless usually suffer from a high level of multiple influencing factors that both limit the ability of agencies to deal or handle their cases as well as compounding the barriers confronting any attempt at recovery.
Recent Immigrants/Refugees	These are individuals, usually from a recognizable racial minority group that have been in the country for less than 5 years.	Poor employable skills Poor life skills	♦ Cultural and racial discrimination. As was the case with aboriginals, cultural and racial discrimination may impact the individual's ability to find either alternative shelter or employment. ♦ Life skills including ability to speak English. A lack of familiarity with social mores may act as a barrier to employment as does a problem or inability to speak English.

Table: Factors Affecting Homelessness -- Part 2: Systemic/Structural Conditions

Condition or Factor	Description	Unique Barriers	Source / Unique Observations
De-Institutionalization	Over the past few years, many western governments have been engaged in a process of de-institutionalizing people that have been living in establishments geared to the physically or mentally ill or disabled. The logic has been that those tenants being released do not require the level of care provided by these institutions – that care can be provided more cheaply by others more geared to providing the less intensive service required. This logic has been reinforced by a desire to see those that have been living within an institutionalized environment become more integrated within the community.	♦ There was no corresponding increase in funding to those less intensive service organizations that were intended to take up those individuals requiring some form of support once released. The result, chronic under funding of support agencies faced with an ever increasing demand. ♦ Gaps emerged in the social support system between the formal care institutions and the social support agencies. Transitional supports are absent or poorly funded creating a situation of homelessness for many.	♦ Literature Review ♦ Focus Groups ***The situation in Alberta and Edmonton specifically with regard to de-institutionalization as Alberta had one of the higher rates of institutionalization prior to the change in policy.***
Housing Affordability and Availability	General levels of affordability and availability of housing, especially housing geared to lower income earners, has been decreasing over the past few years. The impact of this upon levels of homelessness is direct but nonetheless very real.	♦ Lower levels of supply reduce the number of options available to lower/lowest income earners to find suitable accommodation. Examples include reduced number of rooming houses, reduced number of sites for emergency or transitional housing, especially within the downtown core where it is most desperately needed. ♦ Higher prices, both in the form of monthly payments as well as with up-front costs such as down payments, damage deposits, utility deposits and the like all present affordability barriers to lower income groups and the homeless.	♦ Literature Review ♦ Focus Groups. ***While Edmonton has not been characterized by especially high housing costs, the cessation of social housing construction in the city has contributed to a shortage of supply, especially for lower income families/individuals.***

Condition or Factor	Description	Unique Barriers	Source / Unique Observations
Economic Conditions	There have been significant shifts occurring in general economic conditions in Canada over the past 20 years as well as a number of more short term conditions that are affecting rates of homelessness.	♦ General economic improvement in Alberta and Edmonton of the past few years has driven housing and related costs up, reducing levels of housing affordability. ♦ Increased reliance upon contractual and similar employment relationships has reduced the reliability or stability of employment income. This poses unique barriers when shelter/accommodation typically demands regular payments. ♦ Increased numbers of low paying, low skilled service sector jobs (McJobs) are providing employment but not living wages. As a result, reported employment levels belie an increasing affordability gap for those with these lower paying jobs.	♦ Literature Review ♦ Focus Groups ***Alberta has been booming and this has placed very real strains upon housing affordability. As well, Alberta has experienced a significant increase in the number of contractual / shift types of jobs that serve to contribute to the homelessness problem.***
Public Attitudes	Public attitudes toward the homeless vary, however, traditional views have often seen the homeless as too lazy to get a job or simply as 'bums', unworthy of public concern. Attitudes have been changing as more of the public have become aware of some of the root causes of homelessness. Nevertheless, some attitudes concerning the homeless continue to present barriers.	♦ Simple discrimination in apply for or seeking a job. Employers tend to look unfavorably upon those without a job and many applications require the individual to identify a permanent address or residence. ♦ Most hiring processes require access to a phone if only to be called for temporary work or to fill shifts. Being homeless often means not having a phone and therefore, not having access to employment opportunities. ♦ NIMBY, not in my back yard refers to public resistance at having any form of social support housing or shelter close by. This produces a unique set of barriers to the development of social housing as well as transitional housing and shelters that could be used to help alleviate the situation. ♦ Public attitudes toward significant homeless groups or populations also pose specific barriers to the homeless, especially aboriginals and recent	♦ Literature Review ♦ Focus Groups ***In Edmonton, the largest problems identified with public attitudes were the NIMBY problem as well as general levels of discrimination against aboriginals.***

		immigrants and refugees. This may take the form of outright discrimination with regards to employment or housing or take more subtle form that reduces the probability of the individual working their way out of a homeless situation.	
Public Policy & Programs	Public policy refers to the specific policy and programming of the three levels of government. For the most part across all areas examined in the literature review, there is a recognition that government needs to play a role with regard to the provision of affordable housing generally and addressing issues of homelessness specifically. Debate tends to centre on the nature and extent of the role to be played.	♦ Confusion in Canada between the federal and provincial governments as to who has jurisdiction, accountability and responsibility for various aspects of the homeless issue has resulted in delays in the delivery of effective programs and funding. ♦ A leadership gap has developed among the levels of government as each waits to find the appropriate level of accountability that it is willing to undertake. No one level of government wants to take charge. ♦ Conservative government with a high focus upon spending reductions, balanced budgets and fiscal accountability has placed significant (usually funding) constraints on public programs and agency support. The result is a system that is no longer capable of helping those who need it, including the homeless. ♦ Cancellation of new social housing construction in Edmonton has further contributed to the overall level of homelessness.	♦ Literature Review, although this seems to be primarily a Canadian pre-occupation. ♦ Focus Groups ***Specific trends regarding the current government in Alberta, arose out of the focus groups as did concerns regarding the cancellation of new social housing construction..***
Social Support Network	The social support network refers to all those agencies and not for profit groups that provide support to the homeless or those at risk of becoming homeless. The nature of the support may take the form of outreach, emergency shelters, transitional housing,	♦ Lack of available supports including a lack of emergency and transitional shelters. ♦ Lack of support programming and significant gaps in support programs creates a waste of resources as individuals move through the recovery process only to be dropped at certain points along the way. This in turn can create significant levels of disillusionment among those within the programs.	♦ Literature Review ♦ Focus Groups ***The social support network in Edmonton is stretched beyond the capability of agencies to respond effectively to the growing level of homelessness.***

SOLUTIONS: FOCUS GROUP IDEAS FOR ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

This sections summarizes ideas developed during the focus group sessions as well as ideas identified in the agency survey. These ideas were reviewed and summarized in the Table: Proposed Solutions, presented in the pages that follow.

The proposed solutions cover the full spectrum of approaches – from adjusting SFI (Supports For Independence) program to the creation of a well managed housing registry. The results are presented and organized in five major categories;

- Advocacy, dealing with solutions targeted at the attitudes of policy makers and the public at large. Deals with the need to change attitudes, address myths and build public understanding and support.
- Funding, dealing with current funding levels supporting either individuals or agencies and organizations whose mission and mandates are to provide support to the homeless.
- Policy, dealing with policy issues concerning either the federal or provincial governments and their policies concerning responsibility for and conditions concerning the delivery of support to the homeless.
- Programming, specific ideas for addressing the current set of issues and conditions concerning homelessness. These include ideas for additional shelter and housing, support services, financial supports and the like.
- System Design, specific ideas concerning improving how the current set of programs and agencies could be better managed to improve effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery and programmed support.

Detailed listings of solutions are presented in the Appendix to the report.

Table: Potential Solutions

Solution	Classification	Solution Components	Program Logic
Advocate/Ombudsman for the Homeless	Advocacy	♦ Establish office or ombudsman for the homeless. Act as an advocate especially on matters concerning issues with government policy as designed or as applied.	Different responsibilities and accountabilities aligned with different government programs acts as an inhibitor to change. Everyone is in their respective silo's and no one is able to see or address issues that go beyond their bureaucratic boundaries. The task of the ombudsman would be to do precisely that, go beyond boundaries and ensure the homeless are helped.
Public Awareness campaign	Advocacy	♦ An ongoing campaign of information and myth busting is required if public understanding for the issues and its importance is to be appreciated by society at large.	Failure to address homelessness has in large part been due to a lack of appreciation by the public as to the nature and extent of the problem. Likewise, public awareness will have to be increased if effective solutions and levels of funding are to be obtained.
Civic Programmatic Funding to Address Issues of Homelessness	Funding	♦ A specific civic strategy needs to be adopted by the City of Edmonton composed of a specific set of programs with allocated resources. ♦ Commitment of the $1.3M return to the city to Housing Strategy and removal from general revenues. ♦ Components of the strategy may include: ♦ Housing and Land Trust Funds ♦ Re-Entering Low Income Housing Development ♦ Support of Housing Solutions Center ♦ Backing (in partnership) with a Homeless Bank ♦ Facility Development Program with focus on providing space for the diversity of the homeless population ♦ Improving support services.	The City of Edmonton is the closest government organization to the homeless and traditionally is best positioned to address or deliver solutions that deal with housing availability and supply. Areas in which the City becomes involved should be aligned with these areas – housing supply and availability, support for local agency and system improvement solutions.

Solution	Classification	Solution Components	Program Logic
The 1% Solution	Funding	♦ Proposed as a strategy some time ago, the 1% solution is a funding level assigned to housing issues relative to the overall social service budget.	
Increase SFI Amounts	Funding / Policy	♦ Increase the shelter component of SFI. ♦ Increase SFI overall.	The shelter component of SFI no longer reflects the rental rate reality of Alberta's major cities.
Housing Trust Fund	Funding / Programming	♦ City of Edmonton would place a percentage of the revenues received from developers for city land into a trust whose funds are designated exclusively to the development of low income and related housing.	Provide a dedicated cash flow to the financially strapped housing system within the city.
Land Trust	Funding / Programming	♦ Land trust holds the land but allows individual to build a home upon it..	The trust keeps the land in perpetuity thus reducing the overall housing cost
Adjust SFI Shelter Rate Policy	Policy	♦ Ensure individuals receive the full shelter allowance regardless of actual shelter costs ♦ Examine age and related restrictions on SFI shelter component. These may be adjusted to be payable to 16 and 17 year olds currently living without any family support	Currently, individuals SFI is reduced if less expensive accommodation is found. This not only punishes the prudent but also inhibits appropriate economic decision making by those requiring assistance. For example, accommodation is less expensive out of the downtown core, but SFI punishes people for using it since they loose part of the SFI but incur additional transportation costs which are not reimbursed.

Solution	Classification	Solution Components	Program Logic
Move Dollars Closer to Decision Points	Policy	♦ Public programming dollars should be moved as close to the programming decision points as possible. Generally, this means that dollars should follow individuals rather than be attached to agencies. ♦ There are limitations to this approach, however, especially for those people that are incapable of managing their affairs. In such cases, dollars need to follow the but not necessarily be left to the individuals desecration as to where and how to spend.	Moving programming dollars as close to decision points as possible allows those closest to the homeless to make the financial decisions required. Secondly, current funding practice creates situations where agencies compete with one another for funding dollars. The need for programming dollars is sufficiently great that some agencies are perceived as being better at lobbying for funding and proposal writing than they are at providing services that are needed. .
Responsibility Assignment Between Federal and Provincial Governments	Policy	♦ The federal and provincial governments need to clearly define who has what responsibility in relation to the issue. ♦ The City of Edmonton needs to clearly define a position and be prepared to present this position when the newly appointed Minister Responsible for Homelessness visits Edmonton.	Currently, the role of the federal and provincial governments in relation to the homeless is unclear. This situation is prompting delays in action because no side wants to proceed with programs until responsibility is worked out. The newly appointed Minister Responsible for Homelessness from the federal government will be visiting Edmonton soon. Edmonton needs to seize upon the opportunity to contribute to role clarification and stress the need for the two parties to fast track the role clarification issue.
Incentive to Private Sector Owners	Programming / Financial Support	♦ The possibility of providing incentives to the private sector to make the private housing stock more accessible to those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless needs to be investigated. Specifically, programs designed to address; ♦ Cost levels, providing subsidy to either the individual or the landlord in an effort to increase availability of low cost housing, or ♦ Programmatic Support, assuring landlords that 'problem cases' are effectively managed within their accommodations. This could be supplemented by a guaranteed damage deposit program.	The private sector housing market is often an inappropriate solution to homelessness for two reasons, cost and the attendant coping skills/abilities of those who are typically homeless. Landlords are reluctant to rent to people they know or suspect will be a 'problem'. Providing guarantees of both problem management and the loss attributable to damage could ease the situation for those otherwise capable of living independently.

Solution	Classification	Solution Components	Program Logic
Tenant Insurance Program	Programming / Financial Support	♦ Tenant insurance program would be attached to individuals with landlords as beneficiaries to cover any costs of damage done to a rental suite. ♦ The program would also cover any bad debt expense owing to utility companies for services ♦ Insurance coverage would replace the requirement for any form of damage or similar deposit payable to utility companies, that is, such insurance would have be negotiated as acceptable by service providers.	A major barrier for those capable of living on their own and even managing the ongoing cost of rental accommodation is the extent of the up-front costs to establishing residency. These include damage deposits and utility deposits required to get heat, electricity and telephone service. The insurance program would provide a means of overcoming the last barrier that so often stands between the capable adult and finding a home.
Transportation Allowances	Programming / Financial Support	♦ A transportation allowance payable to the individual living some distance from available services or employment. ♦ Free bus tickets to specified individuals living some distance from employment or support services. This particular program poses no additional cost (opportunity or otherwise) to any government agency or department.	Transportation costs are a significant barrier to those living outside of the downtown core, where residential costs are higher but support services and employment opportunities are closer. Providing some form of transportation would allow individuals to pursue housing they can afford while not incurring increased transportation costs for doing so.
Up Front Acquisition Cost Loans	Programming / Financial Support	♦ Acquisition cost loans would be specially managed loans to individuals needing help to overcome the up-front costs. ♦ Loans would be applicable to: ♦ damage deposits ♦ utility deposits ♦ furniture and other capital costs.	Up front acquisitions costs are a major barrier to individuals capable of living independently and having the financial wherewithal to make ongoing rental payments. This goes beyond damage deposits and includes obtaining furniture, dishes, bedding and the like.

Solution	Classification	Solution Components	Program Logic
Emergency Shelters	Programming / Housing	♦ There is an immediate need for additional emergency shelters, especially for; ♦ Battered women, including the capability of housing women with children ♦ Youth, including those 16 and over. This includes a shelter based upon a harm reduction model with no recovery or support programming.	Currently, there is a shortage of emergency shelters within the city. The problem is compounded from a programming perspective because the relatively high degree of targeting that is required in shelter positioning.
Long Term Housing	Programming / Housing	♦ Additional long term facilities are required in Edmonton especially for such groups as; ♦ Low Income levels, while not addressing the homeless situation per se, the targeting of this group can work to reduce those at risk of becoming homeless. ♦ Longer term addiction recovery ♦ Those with mental difficulties including the brain injured. ♦ Families	Targeting those at risk of becoming homeless is a prevention strategy aimed at reducing the financial pressures of those most at risk of becoming homeless. The lack of long term facilities also places the same pressures on transitional support agencies that the lack of transitional supports places on emergency shelters. Specifically, people are staying too long in transitions support programs placing space pressures in transitional programs and wasting existing resources.

Solution	Classification	Solution Components	Program Logic
Long Term Psychiatric/Mental Health Beds	Programming / Housing	♦ Long term mental health and psychiatric beds need to added to the city's housing stock. ♦ Specific additions required include; ♦ Long term psychiatric care for those with serious long term difficulties and are incapable of surviving independently. ♦ Longer term mental health facility providing transitional housing for those between the need for psychiatric care and independent living.	De-Institutionalization is widely recognized as a primary factor in contributing to the current growth in homelessness. The intent of such programs was to decrease reliance on high cost psychiatric care facilities by releasing those who posed no danger to themselves or others – that is did not require such an intensive care environment. Two conditions now exist; ♦ The level of reduction in psychiatric care facilities has probably gone too far resulting in a shortage of beds, and ♦ No intermediate facilities were established that could deal with those posing no danger but were nevertheless incapable of managing their affairs or coping independently due to their mental condition.
Transitional Supportive Housing	Programming / Housing	♦ There is a need for transitional support shelters that can be used to help move people along the road to recovery and finding their own home. There is an immediate need for; ♦ Those recovering from addictions or part of an addition recovery program. ♦ Those being released or that have been released from some form of institution including prison or medical facility.	The lack of transitional supportive housing is having two basic effects; ♦ Individuals are using emergency shelters for periods longer than for which such shelters are designed, decreasing the emergency capability of such services, and ♦ Individuals are being referred to longer term facilities earlier than they should be which both sets the individual up for failure (in capable of living with the level of independence required) as well as increasing the burden on the facility for additional referrals.

Solution	Classification	Solution Components	Program Logic
Discharge Planning for Hospitals	Programming / Planning	♦ Individuals should not be released from hospitals unless the issue of where they are being released to has been resolved especially when the nature of the medical condition has significantly reduced the capability of the individual to survive. ♦ Coordination between shelter agencies and hospitals needs to be improved in the area of referrals.	Hospitals, already under pressure for bed space, often release individuals to the street who have no other place to go, or refer individuals to agencies that are incapable of living with that residence. Requiring a specific release plan for certain types of individuals would help ensure that some limited case management principles are applied to people leaving medical facilities. Improved coordination and information sharing between agencies and medical facilities would work to reduce inappropriate referrals and the waste of resources incurred when such referrals are made.
Discharge Planning for Inmates	Programming / Planning	♦ Where appropriate, discharge planning of inmates needs to take place, ensuring that those who want and need housing assistance receive it.	Release to the streets only perpetuates the cycle of crime, poverty and homelessness. Not all those being released would benefits from discharge planning and some form of transitional housing, but those desiring such supports would clearly benefit.
Bank for the Homeless	Programming / Support Services	♦ A place where the homeless can actually cash cheques is required. ♦ Perhaps create a joint program with a bank to provide technical and related supports to the homeless bank allowing government to underwrite losses etc.	Government programs, especially those providing individuals with money, are predicated upon the assumption that the individual has an address. This is not the case for the homeless. Some form of social bank would ensure individuals could cash their cheques received from such programs as SFI.
Day Care Programs to Keep Families Together	Programming / Support Services	♦ A day care for homeless mothers is required that would allow mothers to actively pursue programs, employment or reduce the risk of (further) family Break-up.	Currently, homeless mothers have very limited opportunities to have their children cared for while they pursue whatever activities may be required to get them off the street. Secondly, some mothers will not pursue government programs if they have children for fear that their children will be taken away from them. A day care designed specifically to address these needs would allow such women to access the support programs they require without putting their

			children at risk of separation.
Solution	**Classification**	**Solution Components**	**Program Logic**
Expand Life Skills Training	*Programming /* Support Services	♦ *There is a need to expand the current level of life skills training* being provided to individuals. Specific programs should target; ♦ Those currently housed on their own but have difficulty in maintaining independence due to their inability to manage their finances or deal with problems. ♦ Current homeless that have become homeless because of an inability to deal with social pressures or issues in a socially acceptable way	*Some individuals* become homeless not for a lack of money, but simply because they are unable to manage their finances or have difficulty in dealing with relatively minor problems, landlord issues and the like. Life skills training and ongoing case management would provide an effective solution before such problems escalate into those requiring major funding posed by becoming homeless..
Improve Support Services for Homeless	Programming / Support Services	♦ Support services need to be introduced as fundamental components of any solution designed to address homelessness. Such programs need to provide: ♦ Supports to those with coping difficulties, ♦ Those recovering from addictions ♦ Those dealing with mental difficulties including the brain injured, and ♦ Those having difficulty managing finances.	The solution to homelessness is too often seen as simply having a lack of a home. However, this misses the reasons why some people became homeless in the first place – including inability to cope, addictions and the like. Support services need to be targeted to specific groups to ensure such supports deal directly with the nature of the coping issue. These need to be provided such that sufficient progress is made that individuals are capable of moving into areas requiring and providing greater independence.
Improve Support Services for Placed Homeless	Programming / Support Services	♦ Support services need to be continued once the individual or family has found housing. : ♦ Supports to those with coping difficulties, ♦ Those recovering from addictions ♦ Those dealing with mental difficulties including the brain injured, and ♦ Those having difficulty managing finances.	Finding some form of residency is too often seen as the end of homelessness. Unfortunately, such is not the case as root causes have not been fully addressed. Ongoing support is often required to ensure people become capable at living independently, thereby reducing the risk of becoming homeless again.

Solution	Classification	Solution Components	Program Logic
A Continuum of Care Approach to Services / 'Stepping Stones'	System Design	♦ The set of services being provided must be managed as a continuum of care reflecting the diverse set of needs of the homeless. ♦ Ongoing program of inter-agency coordination and planning is required to prevent new gaps in service delivery from arising ♦ Referral map needs to be developed, maintained, managed and distributed to every player in the 'homeless' system	The current system of providing support to the homeless has not been so much designed as it has 'evolved'. As a result, significant gaps have developed in the provision of social support services generally and to the homeless specifically. As a result of these gaps, investment in people at one stage is wasted as the system fails to provide any support at some other point in the process of recovery. In short, if moving from a situation of homelessness to one of complete independence is a process, certain parts of the process are well supported, some poorly supported and some not supported at all. Since any process is only as strong as the weakest link, the existence of these support gaps results in recurring failure and wasted efforts and resources.
Coordinate Funding: A Funding Coalition	System Design	♦ There needs to be improved coordination of funding for aiding the homeless to ensure the dollars available are put to best use or areas of highest priority. ♦ A coalition of funding managed by receiving agencies should be examined and has functioned well before in other areas (AIDS/HIV Funding).	Resource allocation decisions are often made too far away from the problem resulting in ineffective allocation of resources. In addition, agencies too often find themselves competing for resources with one another, spending too much effort at supporting application and not enough at helping those who need it.
Identify Gaps in Housing Delivery Profile	System Design	♦ An audit of the gaps existing in service delivery, prioritization of these same gaps and the expenditure of resources to close the priority gaps is required.	The current system for helping the homeless has evolved rather than been designed. As a result, significant gaps have developed in the system. These gaps need to be clearly identified and closed if the system is to be effective in moving people from a state of homelessness to some degree of independent living.
Improve Coordination Among Agencies	System Design	♦ Agency Information System, with information on the agencies in place, type of service and programming as well as referral process. ♦ Programming Information System, could provide additional information on availability of services and related support.	Currently agencies are not aware of another or when they are, referrals are made inappropriately resulting in both service problems and waste of resources.

Solution	Classification	Solution Components	Program Logic
Improve Coordination Among Government Agencies	System Design	♦ Audit of the Gaps Between Programs, gaps between programs need to be identified and programs reconfigured to ensure those entitled to support receive it. ♦ Develop programming that specifically address problems arising from multiple symptomatic individuals.	Current gaps between some government programs result in people falling between the cracks of service delivery. For purposes of managerial control, government programs classify individuals according to some symptom of characteristic. However, the homeless typically have multiple characteristics causing classification problems and program delivery delays.
Solutions Center	System Design	♦ Establish a solutions center for the homeless. ♦ Functions could include: ♦ improving coordination among agencies ♦ facilitating outreach and intake functions ♦ managing agency information and related information systems designed to improve coordination, ♦ advocacy, and ♦ acting as a bank for the homeless.	The lack of coordination among agencies, government departments and other organizations with a stake in the issue requires a single point of contact among the players. In addition, the need to manage an agency information system, program information system and other coordination related elements requires some level of organizational commitment. Without the organization, such programs cannot be maintained.
Adopt Harm Reduction as a Valid Approach	System Design / Programming	♦ The principles of the harm reduction model must be adopted within the range of service delivered to the homeless. ♦	The harm reduction model first attempts to minimize the effects or potential harm that could be done by living homeless. Efforts at programming – that is providing support for recovery come later. Harm reduction – first supporting those that would normally reject any form of programming or 'recovery' – may be the only way to reach specific marginalized groups such as youth homeless, prostitutes and addicts.

Solution	Classification	Solution Components	Program Logic
Apply Case Management Principles Where Possible	System Design / Programming	• Case management provides for support, designed and managed around the individual receiving the support, rather than the agencies providing that same support. Such a system would require a sophisticated information sharing system designed to track the individual through the myriad of services and programs. • Investigation as to the limits of information sharing needs to be conducted so that agencies can do a better job of dealing with individuals and ensuring they get the support they need. Legal limitations must be identified.	Case management systems or approaches have proven themselves superior to traditional agency management approaches in ensuring individual receive effective programming support. There are, however, legal and ethical limitations to the sharing of information and these need to be investigated and identified.
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BEST PRACTICE RESEARCH

Research into best practices used library, research and internet sources in an effort to identify what was being done in various jurisdictions as well as what seemed to be working and not working. From this research, some fundamental summary conclusions can be drawn.

Despite the diversity reflected in the jurisdictions examined, most jurisdictions demonstrated similar circumstances and conditions affecting homelessness.

Best practice research examined data from across North America, Europe and Australia. Despite the diversity reflected by these jurisdictions, the circumstances characterizing homelessness is remarkable similar. Specifically;

- Research across jurisdictions reports similar sets of causes and factors characterizing the homeless. Addictions, family breakdown and violence, de-institutionalization with relatively high levels of the mentally and physically disabled represented in the homeless population as well as the growth of both youth and seniors homelessness are all common characteristics.

- Agency support has tended to evolve rather than be designed. For the most part, the jurisdictions examined report similar sets of responses to the growing homeless problem, with agencies springing up or changing in response to diverse needs. For this reason, the type of agencies and the characteristics of their programming is similar from jurisdiction to jurisdiction

Best practice efforts are focused upon system design – improving coordination and collaboration across the various organizations that provide support to the homeless.

The evolutionary response to issues of homelessness has been effective at developing a set of well targeted agencies focused on meeting the needs of specific groups of the homeless. However, this same approach is characterized by agencies becoming competitive for funding dollars, large gaps existing in the provision of programming and the simple inability to communicate or collaborate effectively for the benefit of the homeless.

Best practices are emerging to address these issues. The improvement strategy is to place less reliance on simply providing more resources in the same way (simply increasing the levels of existing supports) toward a model of changing the way in which services are provided with an eye to increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of current resource levels.

Specific areas of coordination and collaboration that are beginning to affect system design are:

- Coordination and collaboration on funding. Bringing those who use the money available together to decide how best to spend it. These best practices encourage the movement of funding decision making away from the ivory towers of policy makers and closer to those who not only most appreciate local conditions but also who need it most. Moreover, evidence suggests that collaboration among agencies in this regard promotes the search for efficient solutions and encourages shared use of resources among support agencies.

- Continuum of Care (Stepping Stones). Designing the system instead of letting it simply evolve by consciously identifying gaps in the system and developing programs to fill them. Best practice is to provide a continuous set of programs and services designed to provide the right level of support at the right time and at the right place, maximizing the probability of the individuals return to independence. This approach was labeled 'stepping stones' by a couple of workshop participants.

- Coordination of programming and agency activity. Even with collaboration around funding and a continuum of care in place, improved coordination of activities across the various players in the system is required to make things work as they should. Lessons from best practice indicates that this coordination must take place not only among support agencies but among levels of government and between government and support agencies as well.

The degree to which improved system redesign has become an emerging strategy to dealing with issues of homelessness is evidenced by best practice review of activities in the United States. In a review of over 100 best practice examples highlighted by HUD, about 70% involved the improvement to the way in which programming was delivered in managed within specific jurisdiction's.

APPENDIX OF BEST PRACTICES

The best practices highlighted in this Appendix are the detailed best practice descriptions from various sources including HUD, CMHC and various sources in Europe.

- Summaries of Best Practice

Table: Summaries of Best Practice (Part 1: HUD)

Name of Project	Location	Classification	Best Practice
Countywide AIDS Housing Program	Alameda County	Affordable Housing	Project Independence, a HUD Special HOPWA Project of National Significance designed to keep people with HIV/AIDS living independently in the community.
Concord House	Alameda County	Affordable Housing	Eight units of supportive, affordable housing for homeless persons with AIDS.
Effective Implementation of Affordable Housing Strategy	Baltimore	Affordable Housing	The City utilized an aggressive strategy to address housing needs along City-wide concentrated areas and utilized every program available to construct new and rehabilitated housing units for rent or ownership.
Producing Affordable Housing through Partnership	Hillsborough County	Affordable Housing	Housing partnerships greatly reduce the risks inherent in single-funded development activities and promote public awareness and interest in affordable housing.
A Coordinated Approach to Affordable Housing	Lawrence	Affordable Housing	A set of goals was established and tangible projects were implemented to address the 3 target areas - affordable rental units, affordable single family housing and affordable housing for the elderly.
Louisville Affordable Housing Strategy	Louisville	Affordable Housing	The City's strategy and related housing programs have resulted in partnerships that have produced significant and visible results in improving and expanding affordable housing for low income residents.
Mayor's Housing Partnership - Macon's Neighborhood Challenge	Macon	Affordable Housing	Since inception, the City has seen an unparalleled increase in private sector participation in its housing programs involving government, private lending and nonprofit institutions to improve housing opportunities.
Decent Housing Strategy	Maui County	Affordable Housing	County's aggressive, innovative and highly motivated approach to the decent housing program
Decent Affordable Housing and Leveraging of Resources	Phoenix	Affordable Housing	Considerable volume of housing units produced and the number of households assisted was considerable for a grantee of this size.
Multi-Family Rental Housing Production	Portland (Oregon)	Affordable Housing	The City has taken a proactive approach to developing affordable housing for current and future citizens.

Name of Project	Location	Classification	Best Practice
Leveraging Public/Private Financing for Affordable Housing Development	San Jose	Affordable Housing	The bulk of annual funding for affordable housing is tremendous and used to develop affordable housing in what is considered to be a very expensive housing market.
Bridges Program	Tucson & Pima County	Affordable Housing, Homeless Adults and Families, Job Training	Program represents permanent, self-sustaining programs to provide jobs and housing and addresses needs for jobs and housing - the top priorities identified in the continuum of care.
Rehabilitation and Affordable Housing Programs	Nashville	Affordable Housing, Homeownership Opportunities, Housing Rehabilitation, New Construction, Rental Assistance	City is achieving and exceeding its goals and objectives by targeting a full range of housing programs to meet the needs of all of its citizens.
Provision of Decent Housing	Ponce	Affordable Housing, Housing Rehabilitation	The City has developed a strong partnership by obtaining commitments from community stakeholders in the development of affordable housing which has led to an increase in public investment.
Affordable Housing, Rehabilitation	Trenton	Affordable Housing, Rehabilitation	The City is committed to providing affordable housing by actively working with nonprofit organizations to provide units through new construction and/or rehabilitation.
Name of Project	Location	Classification	Best Practice
The Forum Apartment Building	Denver	Colorado Coalition for the Homeless Continuum of Care	A donated, vacant city-owned ten storey office building which provides housing for 100 formerly homeless individuals creating a socially and economically stable environment to receive counseling, treatment and basic skills in hopes of eventually achieving self-sufficiency.
Homeless Coordinating Committee	Pittsburgh and Allegheny County	Community Planning, Partnerships, Homeless Adults and Families	All providers and advocacy groups meet frequently to network, hear presentations on current programs and discuss common problems.
Creating A Suitable Living Environment	Ponce	Comprehensive Community Revitalization	The City developed short and long-term goals of reduced poverty and new housing, and demonstrated it's ability to effectively manage its programs by developing strong community involvement and participation
Consolidated Planning	San Jose	Consolidated Planning	Effective City and Community collaboration that describe and document priority needs and a clear strategy for affordable housing.

Name of Project	Location	Classification	Best Practice
Expansion Base Closure	Alameda County	Continuum of Care	Homeless providers in Alameda County formed a collaborative to secure property for homeless usage at closing military bases.
Domestic Violence and Special Needs Housing	Bergen County	Continuum of Care	The County submitted a very successful application for homeless funds and identified homeless persons and their needs and matched them with all available services.
Department of Human Services-Computerized Homeless Information and Referral Process Program	Colorado State	Continuum of Care	The CHIRP project is dramatically changing the way information and referrals are made in the homeless and human service community by making the information timely, accurate and comprehensive.
Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless	Columbia	Continuum of Care	A comprehensive system to increase the availability of services and housing for the region's homeless population by bringing together the energy, resources and capabilities of the community stakeholders.
Homeless Services Consortium	Dane County	Continuum of Care	High level of commitment in implementing the Continuum of Care plan and in the ongoing coordination of housing and services for the homeless.
Homeless Action Network	Detroit	Continuum of Care	Eliminated the divisiveness among nonprofits, promoted collaboration and encouraged combined funding efforts for the homeless community.
The Glendale Homeless Coalition	Glendale	Continuum of Care	Addressing homelessness through a community-based strategy aimed at developing a comprehensive and coordinated Continuum of Care.
Substance Abuse / Mentally Ill	Honolulu	Continuum of Care	Took active leadership roles to develop a solution to the changing needs of Honolulu's homeless by securing the financial and technical support necessary to coordinate the efforts and resources of partners.
Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust	Miami-Dade County	Continuum of Care	Coordination of homeless strategies and funding of outreach assessment, emergency shelters, transitional shelters, permanent supportive housing and permanent housing programs to prevent homelessness.
Housing	Minneapolis and Hennepin County	Continuum of Care	Established an implementation team of housing funders to facilitate cooperation between diverse public and private groups to address gaps identified in the Continuum of Care.

Name of Project	Location	Classification	Best Practice
Homeless Coalition Activities	New Orleans	Continuum of Care	The program houses formerly homeless persons who are in active recovery from substance abuse in a mid-city neighborhood.
Continuum of Care	Norwalk	Continuum of Care	A consortium of agencies developed and implemented a comprehensive survey to better quantify the scope of homelessness in Norwalk to provide insight into the needs of the homeless.
San Antonio Metropolitan Ministry	San Antonio	Continuum of Care	SAMM provides a continuum of care for families with children to help them move homelessness to self-sufficiency through a structured, safe and supportive environment.
Regional Reception Center for Homeless Persons	Santa Clara County	Continuum of Care	The completion of the Centre represents the first operational comprehensive homeless facility of its kind in California created as an alternative to the interim-use of State armory facilities as homeless shelters.
Community-Wide Intake and Assessment System and Web Site Program	Spokane	Continuum of Care	First fully functional, interactive homeless computer network in the State of Washington that has linked providers and local government used as a management tool for tracking and implementing programs.
Continuum of Care	Tarrant County	Continuum of Care	Committed to receiving input from a wide diversity of homeless persons, advocates, agencies and local government which has resulted in a unique collaboration of homeless services in this area.
Coordinated Homeless Services	Urbana & Champaign	Continuum of Care	Since the contiguous borders of the two cities proved easy access for the homeless to cross, the two communities partnered and pooled funding to address homeless needs for each community.
The West Virginia Homeless Shelters Program	West Virginia State	Continuum of Care	The State consolidated all of its funding for homeless programs and made it a single point of contact for groups seeking financial assistance to serve the homeless.
Evansville Housing Authority HIV/AIDS Housing Project Program	Evansville	Decent Housing	The Evansville Housing authority partnered with AIDS Resource Group to create the first dedicated HIV/AIDS housing units in the City.
Affordable Housing, Finance, and Preservation Programs Program	San Bernardino	Decent Housing	Administers a complex overall affordable housing program that addresses various affordable housing needs in an outstanding manner.

Name of Project	Location	Classification	Best Practice
Southfield Housing Department - SHAPE Program	Southfield	Decent Housing	Southfield's SHAPE program is a comprehensive, team approach that successfully addresses the priority need of maintaining and improving the housing stock by doing major repairs such as roof replacements and electrical updates.
Affordable Housing Trust Fund	Tallahassee	Decent Housing	Excellent means to leverage money for federal and state funds while at the same time enabling the City to fund more affordable housing projects.
Denver's Improved Delivery of Emergency Housing Services Program	Denver	Department of Social Services Continuum of Care	Provision of motel vouchers for homeless families by the Department of Social Services partnered with non-profit organizations to provide formal intake and assessment and supportive services.
Jobs for Homeless Consortium	Alameda County	Economic Opportunity	Assisting homeless persons overcome dependency on welfare by empowering them to self-sufficiency through an integrated continuum of training and employment as well as housing services.
Metropolitan Birmingham Services for the Homeless	Birmingham	Homeless Adults and Families	The two entitlements have formed a partnership which has promoted a genuine status of cooperation thereby proven to be an advantage for the entire community in executing the Continuum of Care initiative.
Orange County/Chapel Hill Consortium	Chapel Hill	Homeless Adults and Families	The Chapel Hill Council showed its concern about the critical shortage of affordable housing in the Town by forming an 11 member to review existing studies and needs assessments and recommend specific implementation steps.
Continuum of Care	Portland (Maine)	Homeless Adults and Families	No one is homeless in Portland for any length of time without receiving services, especially health care, due to the collaboration among providers and their focus on the homeless population.
Chatham-Savannah Continuum of Care	Savannah	Homeless Adults and Families	All-inclusive approach encourages agencies to interact with one another in all matters of program planning, funding and evaluation which significantly reduces the duplication of efforts and maximizes the use of existing resources.
St. Mary's Interfaith Dining Room	Stockton	Homeless Children (Education)	One of the few schools that concentrates exclusively on the education of homeless children.
Unity for the Homeless	New Orleans	Homeless, Partnerships, Public Services	Unity is the centre of a partnership of public and private sectors that coordinates and facilitates inter-agency collaboration of a coalition of more than fifty homeless

Name of Project	Location	Classification	Best Practice
			services providers.
Homeownership	Allentown	Homeownership	Increase affordable homeownership opportunities and to improve the housing stock in the two designated areas of the City that had great need for improvement.
Cobb Housing Inc.	Cobb County	Homeownership	Is helping make the dream of homeownership a reality for hundreds of families through educational seminars which are sponsored by lenders, held twice a month
Fort Wayne Neighborhood Housing Project	Fort Wayne	Homeownership	Since 1992, the Project has placed 302 families into homes and issued $12 million in loans for first-time, limited income homebuyers.
Citylights at Queens Landing	Long Island City	Homeownership	Excellent example of fostering homeownership opportunities for moderate-income families and the effectiveness of a working partnership between State, Federal and Local governments, and private industry.
Boston Continuum of Care	Boston	Housing	Since 1980, the City of Boston has made the issue of homelessness a top priority by the exchange of information and trust among City staff and private housing and service providers.
Greenville Homeless Coalition Continuum of Care	Greenville	Housing	Succeeded in coordinating its service providers to expand the number of homeless families and persons served in Greenville.
Harris County Collaborative for the Homeless	Harris County	Housing	Successful collaboration and comprehensiveness in its homeless continuum of care process.
Cabell-Huntington Coalition for the Homeless	Huntington	Housing	Homeless agencies in the Huntington area have combined their experience, expertise and funding sources to address the needs of the homeless.
Continuum of Care	Quincy	Housing	The City has attempted to build it's continuum of care within the community delivery system by identifying gaps and addressing the needs of the homeless.
Seattle-King County Continuum of Care	Seattle and King County	Housing	Strong intergovernmental coordination of two processes had led to many shared regional responses to homelessness and many of the new service programs are proving to be efficient, cost effective and easy for clients to use.
Continuum of Care Orlando/Orange County	Orange County	Housing (Outreach & Assessment)	Comprehensive delivery approach used to reach the hard-to-serve homeless enables the team to conduct multiple assessments in a time-effective manner

Name of Project	Location	Classification	Best Practice
			thereby reducing the client's stress and establishing rapport.
Gregson Special Needs Apartments	Salt Lake County	Housing Opportunities	Unique and innovative partnerships combined to build the Apartments which serve some of the most needy people - homeless persons with tuberculosis.
Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless	Baton Rouge	Housing, Homeless Adults and Families	Continuum of Care plan includes multiple stages of care beginning with immediate shelter and moving toward transitional and eventually permanent housing, calling for stronger commitments from its nonprofit, public/private entity members.
Mayor's Council on Homelessness and Affordable Housing	Charleston	Housing, Homeless Adults, and Families	The Mayor and Council focused the community's attention on the problems associated with the poor and coordinated all efforts with community stakeholders.
Continuum of Care	San Juan	Mainstreaming Homeless Persons	Mainstreaming homeless persons in hopes of self-sufficiency by referring homeless to assistance providers, emergency shelters, transitional housing and permanent housing.